TESTS Comparison: Honda GL500 Interstate vs. GL1100 Interstate
Comparison: Suzuki RM465 vs. Yamaha YZ465

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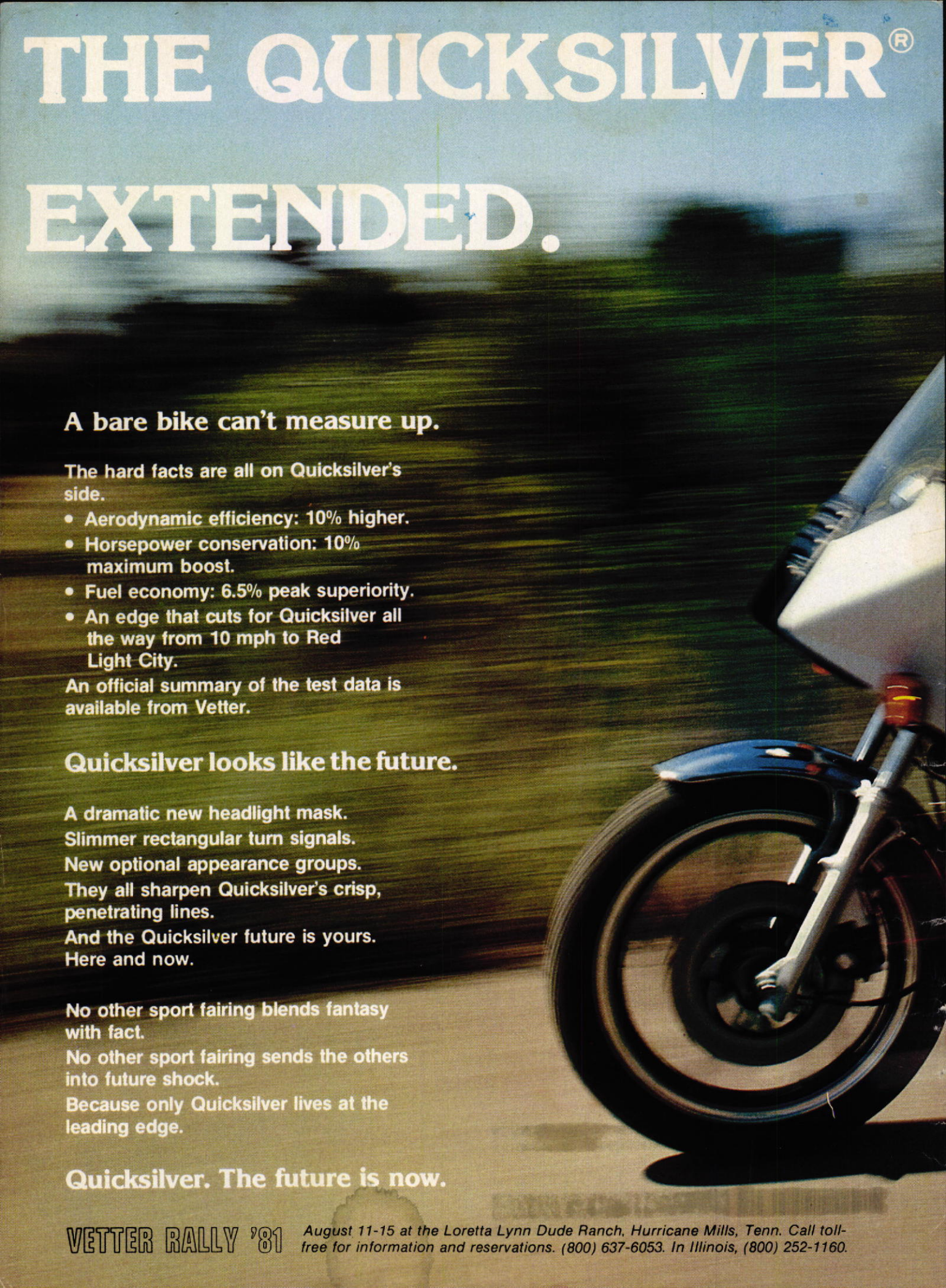

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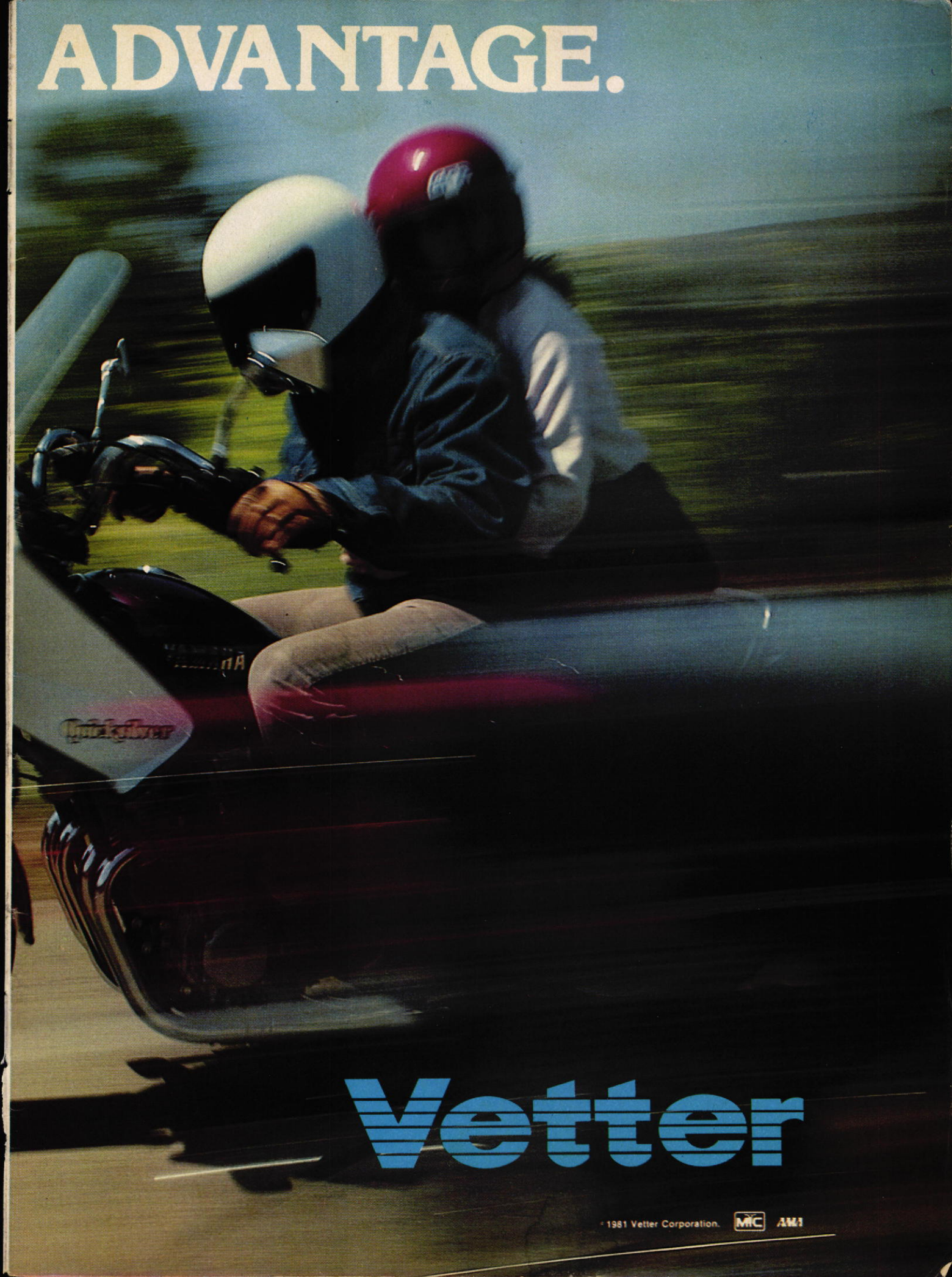
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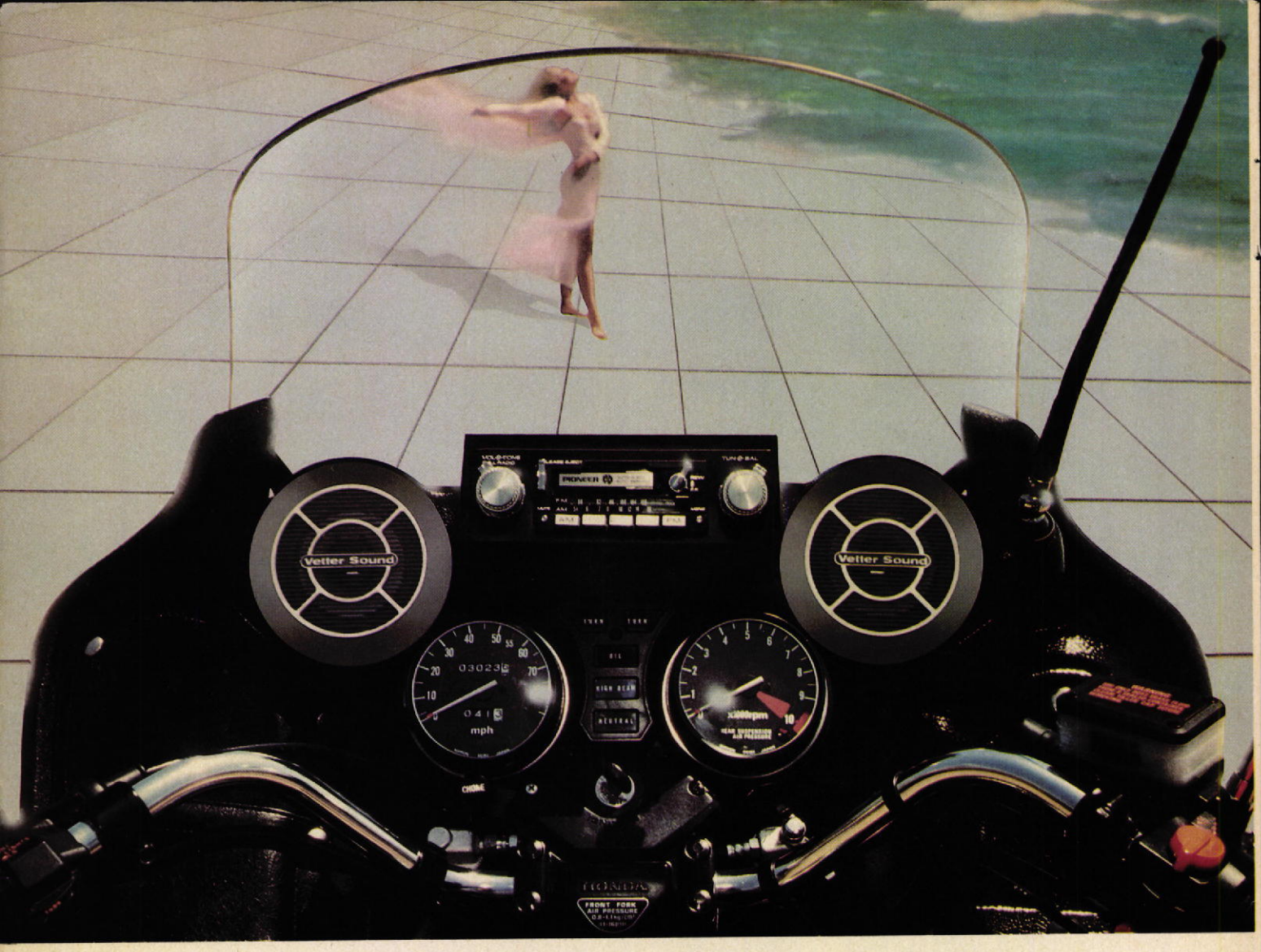

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ON THE COVER:
Two generations of turn-key touring, taken from Honda's family album. Silver Wing and Gold Wing—the two trickest touring rigs to come down the pike. Photo by Chris Eastman.

QUOTE:
"I've dealt with the AMA for a long time, and they're a pretty ignorant bunch . . . They don't understand anything. But when they get offered something they can *use*, they want to take it away from everybody and make it their own." —**Pg. 52**

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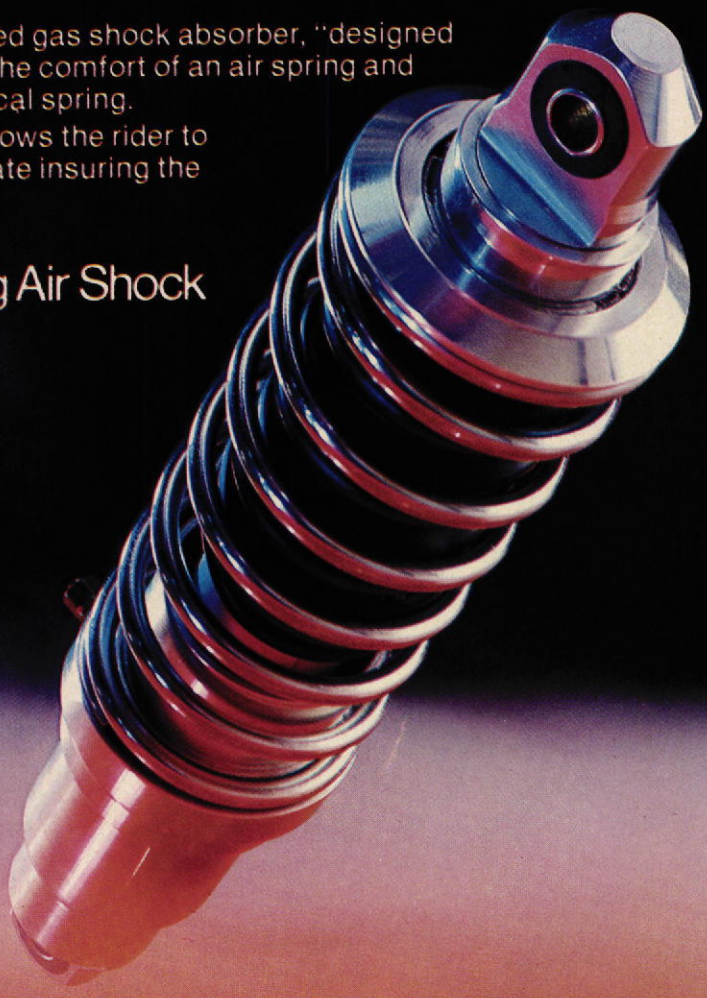

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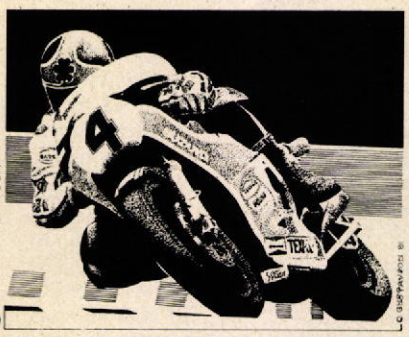

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OFF-ROAD

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE	WHEEL TRAVEL, IN. FRONT/REAR	WEIGHT, LBS	HORSEPOWER @ RPM*		GEARS
Can-Am 250 MX-5	Jan. '79	Two-str.	10.8/10.0	218	32.1	8500	5
Can-Am 250 Qualifier III	Feb. '80	Two-str.	9.7/9.8	230	25.2	8000	6
Cam-Am 400 MX-6	June '80	Two-str.	11.5/10.8	233	38.3	6500	5
Honda CR125R	April '81	Two-str.	10.6/11.5	213	NA	NA	6
Honda CR250R	May '80	Two-str.	11.8/11.0	222	27.5	7000	5
Honda CR450R	Feb. '81	Two-str.	11.0/12.5	236	NA	NA	4
Honda XR185	March '79	Four-str.	8.0/7.75	221	12.8	10000	6
Honda XR500	May '79	Four-str.	8.5/8.6	273	25.8	6500	5
Husqvarna 125CR-'80	Nov. '79	Two-str.	11.8/11.8	214	18.8	11000	6
Husqvarna 250WR	July '81	Two-str.	9.5/10.3	248	20.9	7500	6
Husqvarna 420AXC	Oct. '80	Two-str.	11.5/11.9	239	NA	NA	4
Husqvarna 430CR	March '81	two-str.	11.9/11.3	239	33.3	6500	6
Kawasaki KDX250	July '81	Two-str.	9.9/11.0	248	24.3	7000	6
Kawasaki KDX175	Dec. '80	Two-str.	9.6/9.8	222	15.3	8500	6
Kawasaki KX125 A7	Jan. '81	Two-str.	10.4/11.3	207	20.9	12000	6
Kawasaki KX250	Sept. '80	Two-str.	11.3/11.2	233	26.8	8000	5
Kawasaki KX420	July '80	Two-str.	11.0/11.3	250	34.0	7000	5
Maico 400 MI	April '80	Two-str.	12.3/12.0	233	35.5	7000	5
Maico 450 MI	April '80	Two-str.	12.3/12.0	236	37.0	7000	5
Montesa Cappra 414 VE	Oct. '79	Two-str.	10.9/10.7	236	28.5	6500	4
Suzuki PE400	Nov. '80	Two-str.	11.3/11.3	250	30.9	7000	5
Suzuki RM125X	June '81	Two-str.	10.8/11.7	205	20.7	11500	6
Suzuki RM250N	May '79	Two-str.	11.2/11.8	218	27.1	8000	5
Suzuki RM400N	Sept. '79	Two-str.	11.2/11.8	229	28.1	7500	5
Yamaha Pro-Tec 600	Nov. '79	Four-str.	10.5/10.1	262	46.2	6500	5
Yamaha IT250G	Dec. '79	Two-str.	9.8/9.8	244	27.7	8000	6
Yamaha TT250G	Aug. '80	Four-str.	8.8/7.5	242	17.7	8000	5
Yamaha YZ250G	March '80	Two-str.	11.2/11.6	217	29.6	8000	6
Yamaha IT465	May '81	Two-str.	10.0/11.4	247	38.1	6500	5
Yamaha YZ465G	July '80	Two-str.	11.2/11.8	228	39.4	7000	5

*Horsepower shown is taken at the rear wheel and does not account for transmission losses between the engine and rear wheel. These results may differ from manufacturer's claims or from results obtained using a different dynamometer.

STREET

MAKE & MODEL	ISSUE	ENGINE TYPE*	QUARTER-MILE, SEC./MPH	TOP SPEED, MPH	WEIGHT, LBS	FUEL CONSUMPTION, MPG	STOPPING DISTANCE FROM 60 MPH, FT.
BMW R65	March '81	2C/G	14.16/92.1	110	423	45-50	133
BMW R100RS	May '81	2C/G	13.48/98.4	127	492	34-52	145
Ducati Darmah	Sept. '78	90-deg. 2D/F	13.41/97.5	118	487	25-40	120
Dunstall-Suzuki GS1000 CS	July '79	4A/F	11.32/117.0	154	488	37-54	124
H-D CLE Sidecar	Sept. '79	45-deg. 2D/F	17.60/69.3	91	1036	25-35	181
H-D Tour Glide	Sept. '80	45-deg. 2D/F	15.58/83.9	108	785	35-44	161
Honda CB400T Hawk	March '80	2A/F	14.37/88.6	100	391	51-65	139
Honda CX500 Custom	Aug. '79	80-deg. 2E/G	14.12/92.9	102	468	44-51	146
Honda CB650 Custom	Dec. '79	4A/F	13.10/99.8	113	447	44-52	131
Honda CB750F	June '81	4A/F	12.40/108.3	118	526	38-53	126
Honda CB750C	Nov. '80	4A/F	12.68/105.3	128	530	39-46	131
Honda CB900F	July '81	4A/F	12.21/111.1	141	547	41-47	130
Honda Interstate	March '80	4C/G	13.40/96.0	121	718	33-45	146
Honda CBX	May '81	6A/F	12.01/113.9	136	646	23-40	130
Kawasaki KZ440D	Feb. '81	2A/F	14.59/89.1	107	383	56-64	135
Kawasaki KZ550	Sept. '80	4A/F	13.45/97.1	103	426	37-51	150
Kawasaki KZ750	June '81	4A/F	12.43/108.2	128	471	38-60	128
Kawasaki KZ1000J	Feb. '81	4A/F	11.62/116.3	130	521	30-51	135
Kawasaki KZ1100	April '81	4A/F	11.62/117.6	140	559	38-44	NA
Kawasaki GPz1100	July '81	4A/F	11.44/118.6	133	538	38-47	158
Kawasaki KZ1300A GT	Sept. '80	6A/G	12.71/107.4	135	730	31-45	146
Laverda 1200 Jota	Dec. '78	3A/F	12.54/105.0	121	518	29-37	145
R.C. Turbo CB750F	Oct. '80	4A/F	11.99/113.8	NA	523	27-39	135
Suzuki GS450 ST	May '80	2A/F	14.09/92.5	100	397	55-57	127
Suzuki GS750EX	June '81	4A/F	12.26/108.6	128	525	44-52	130
Suzuki GS1000E	Aug. '80	4A/F	11.98/113.9	136	528	32-50	137
Suzuki GS1000G	Aug. '80	4A/G	12.34/110.8	139	564	30-51	141
Suzuki GS1100EX	July '81	4A/F	11.36/118.6	141	535	43-48	123
Triumph Bonneville Special	July '79	2A/F	13.94/96.2	110	411	45-55	175
Yamaha RD350LC	Dec. '80	Two-str. 2/AF	13.23/101.0	113	328	NA	126
Yamaha XJ550RH Seca	May '81	4A/G	12.99/101.7	121	418	44-55	119
Yamaha XJ650 Maxim I	June '80	4A/G	12.60/107.4	120	453	40-54	128
Yamaha XJ650	Nov. '80	4A/G	13.19/102.4	125	476	43-44	NA
Yamaha Seca 750	June '81	4A/F	12.26/108.0	128	495	44-56	134
Yamaha Virago	March '81	75-deg.2D/G	13.28/99.8	105	481	47-51	132
Yamaha XS850LG	Feb. '80	3A/G	13.10/101.7	116	548	42-55	144
Yamaha XS1100LH	Jan. '81	4A/G	11.99/113.5	130	562	41-46	133

*A-Transverse Vertical, B-Vertical, (single-cylinder only), C-Horizontally Opposed, D-Tandem Vee, E-Transverse Vee, /F-Chain Final Drive, /G-Shaft Final Drive, /H-Belt Final Drive

Editorial

Seeing Red

Is it real or merely a pigment of the imagination?

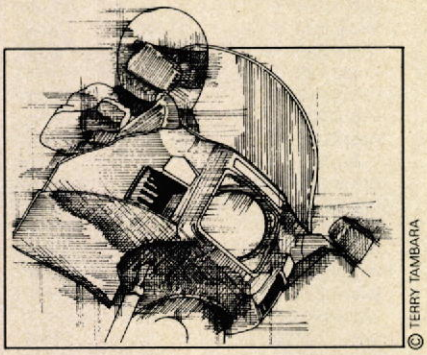
• Fast motorcycles deserve to be painted fast colors. And the fastest of the fast hues is, without a doubt, red.

Not all motorcycles, of course, look their best in red, but in most instances the racy, sporty models seem their raciest and sportiest when they're painted red. Not maroon or burgundy, not metallic red or even candy red, but *red* red, like fire-engine red or Ferrari red or the Firecracker Red, as Kawasaki has named it, that's on the GPz550 and GPz1100. Now *that's* how performance bikes are supposed to look. Mean. Fast. Purposeful. Uncompromised. And red. Very, very *red.*

Count me in amongst the throngs of enthusiasts who have fallen hopelessly in love with red bikes, but don't think that the infatuation is limited to motorcycles; red has long been the most popular color sprayed onto cars, boats and planes of the racy/sporty ilk. And a red paint job doesn't work its seductive magic exclusively on hard-core motorheads; a bright red bike can turn heads in just about any crowd at any time. All manner of people will stop and stare at a shiny red motorcycle, even if they have no interest whatsoever in riding on one.

There's a flip side to that high-profile coin, though, which is that another group also takes special notice of red motorcycles: the police. Riding a red bike, you see, is almost like climbing aboard a mobile neon signboard that boldly announces "Here I am" to everyone in the vicinity, including those who wear badges and write tickets. Meaning that if you're riding a red motorcycle, you can count on being noticed by any cops who are in the area. In which case you can also count on something else: If your rate of speed is slightly above the posted limit and you're hoping that the cop will give you the benefit of the doubt, chances are he won't. Cops generally aren't in the business of doling out benefits, especially to someone who's riding one of the most noticeable vehicles in sight and who seems, by exceeding the limit slightly, to be pressing the officer's generosity. So while I'm not proposing that riding a red motorcycle is a sure-fire way to get ticketed, you *are* more likely to get caught doing something wrong on a red bike simply because you're more noticeable.

Why, then, do so many enthusiasts, including me, drool all over motorcycles that are potentially troublesome because



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of their color? Simple. They look utterly fantastic, the way God intended motorcycles to look, that's why.

Now, I know that the main reason a red bike is so conspicuous is because the color itself has such high visibility; but I'm not so sure why or how red has such a mesmerizing effect when it's painted on a motorized vehicle. But it does. And if you need evidence, just belly up to the nearest GPz Kawasaki and watch what happens. That bike, in either its 550cc or 1100cc incarnation, is *exciting.* So much so that the minute you get close to one, it begins to take possession of you. Your palms start to sweat and your pulse quickens. You want to stop looking and start riding. And if that's not possible, your imagination comes alive, filling your head with the sights and sounds of tilted horizons, clipped apexes and wailing engines, with *you* at the GPz's controls.

I will concede that to some extent, the GPz is beguiling because it has The Right Stuff—lots of flat-black instead of chrome, the proper shapes in the proper places, strong roadracer overtones and the like. Still, without that flaming red paint, the GPz's visual and emotional impact wouldn't be nearly so powerful, so compelling. That paint is the catalyst that pulls all of the individual bits together to produce a soul-stirring motorcycle that looks like it's going 120 while it's parked.

The trouble is, you're not the only one who thinks so. The cops do, too. Which is why they're likely not to see the gray Buick that's going 60, the dark blue GS1000 Suzuki that's traveling close to 65 and the brown Citation that just made an illegal lane-change, all while chasing you and your red GPz for doing 58 in a 55 zone. Not because they're picking on you, but because they *noticed* you more easily than they did the plain-jane offenders.

This problem isn't exclusive to GPzs, of course; almost any kind of red-red motorcycle will do an equally fine job of attracting The Man's attention. I've known about those red-bike blues for years because a number of my friends have gotten tickets that they blamed on riding a red bike. But the majority of them really deserved their tickets, and most of the rest were marginally guilty—but guilty nonetheless. But a few *swore* they were innocent, although I found it hard to believe that they were given a citation just for riding a red motorcycle.

Well, at least nothing like that had ever happened to me. Not, that is, until Memorial Day. Steve Thompson and I were southbound on the Harbor Freeway that afternoon aboard red motorcycles—him on the GPz1100 behind me on the GPz550. Neither of us nudged past 57 or 58 mph, which was just fast enough to let us keep pace with the ubiquitous but inconspicuous four-wheelers. Then Thompson briefly spurted up beside me, maybe hitting 62 or 63 for a few seconds, to signal that we had to exit at the next offramp, and *blam!*—on came the red light atop the black-and-white Dodge behind us. The next thing we knew, Officer P.W. McGinnis, one of the CHP's most dour and taciturn emissaries, had given both of us citations for going 64 in a 55 zone.

We're going to fight it, of course, on the grounds that we really weren't *speeding,* that McGinnis ticketed both of us as a result of Thompson's brief-but-necessary acceleration. But we'll lose, no doubt. We'll pay the fines and stomp out of the courtroom feeling outraged, injusticed and $28.50 apiece lighter, believing that only the redness of our bikes got us noticed in the first place. But you know what? If we had it to do all over again, we'd still ride those same two red motorcycles on that same road that same day. Because it's going to take a lot more than a traffic ticket to discourage us from riding motorcycles— those *red* red ones.

I suspect that most of you feel the same way. But just make sure that you know, if you don't already, that the cost of a red bike is higher than what's listed on the pricetag. The added cost is called conspicuity, and the payments on it won't stop even when the last check has been mailed to the bank.

The reason is that the color in question here isn't always called "red." To the cop who's following you, it's called Probable Cause.

—Paul Dean

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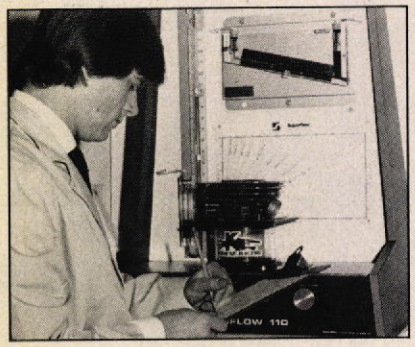
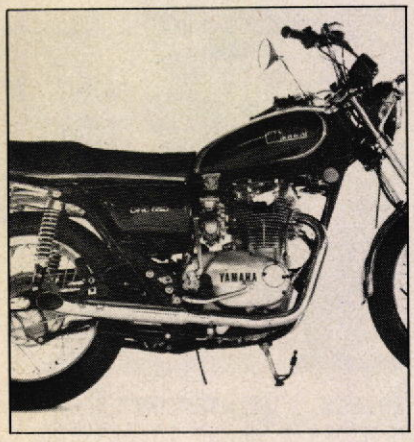
Go With The Flow: Krause Racing is introducing a new porting service for two-stroke engines, with port modifications tested on a flow bench rather than relying on visual or mechanical inspection of the flow improvements. The procedure is adapted from four-stroke porting techniques and is claimed to eliminate guesswork. Complete data sheets are provided with the finished work. This technique is available for any single or multi-cylinder two-stroke engine. For free literature write Krause Racing, 305 E. North Avenue, Northlake, Illinois 60164, or phone (312) 344-2233.



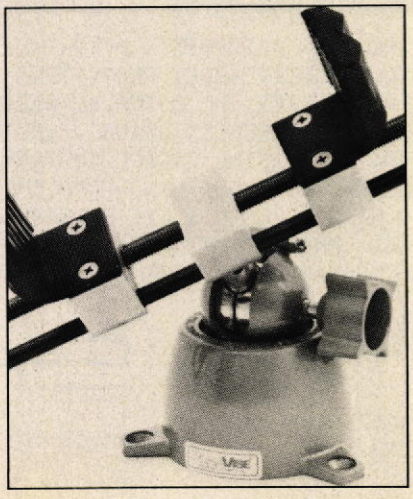
Faster, Faster: R.C. Engineering's 1981 product catalog is available and ready to tempt you. It's full of performance parts for all the Japanese multi-cylinder street machines. You'll find goodies like big-bore kits, cams, exhaust systems, turbochargers and more. Machine shop and engine building services are also available. To get your copy send $3.00 to R.C. Engineering, 13300 Estrella Avenue, Gardena, California 90248.

Investment Protection: Your bike's logo is proudly emblazoned on this motorcycle cover from GA-ZEE-BO. The Custom Deluxe cover uses a nylon-screened ventilator to reduce condensation on the motorcycle and features a weather-resistant polyester outer layer. An inner liner of aluminized fabric acts as a heat shield to protect the cover from a hot engine. Styles are available for Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and BMW with prices starting at $59.95. See them at your local dealer or contact TEX-ALL Company Inc., P.O. Box 3038, Montrose, Michigan 48457. Or call toll free (800) 521-7916; in Michigan call (800) 482-0988.

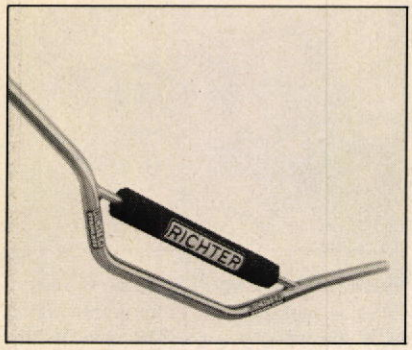


Alphabet Headers: If your Yamaha XS650 is ready for new mufflers, then Alphabet's has a budget-custom system for you. The chrome turn-out mufflers don't require jetting changes and are made from 18-gauge steel for durability. Alphabet claims an increase in performance plus weight savings over the stock system. The mufflers come complete with mounting hardware and instructions. Retail price is $88.50 a pair. For more information contact Alphabet's Custom West Corporation, 12572 Western Avenue, Garden Grove, California 92641; (714) 897-3561.

Jaws For Your Workbench: Panavise's new model 376 vise can hold heavy objects because the weight self-centers over the base. It also features an extra-wide-opening head (to nine inches) with double-action jaws for fast opening and closing. It will fit all the Panavise Series 300 bases and features a black oxide finish. For $19.95 you can have jaws in your own garage. For more information, contact a hardware dealer or write Panavise Products, Inc., 2850 E. 29th St., Long Beach, California 90806; (213) 595-7621.

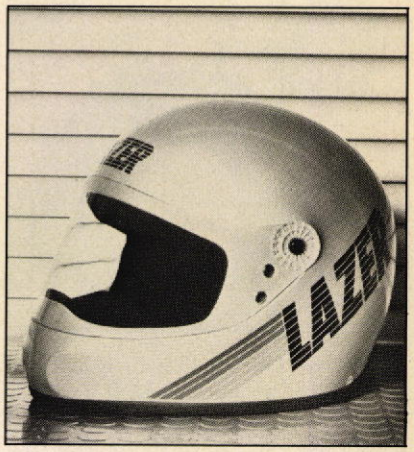


Cover Ups For Gold Wings: Coast Cycle can wrap-up your tank and gas your gear. Their new tank cover not only protects your beautiful tank from pits and scratches, but it has gripper strip fasteners to mount a Chase/Harper Compac Tank Bag. Two zippers provide access to the gas cap and tool compartment. Your Gold Wing might thank you with lasting shininess if you contact Coast Cycle Imports, 392 N. Saticoy Ave., Ventura, California 93004; (805) 647-0670.



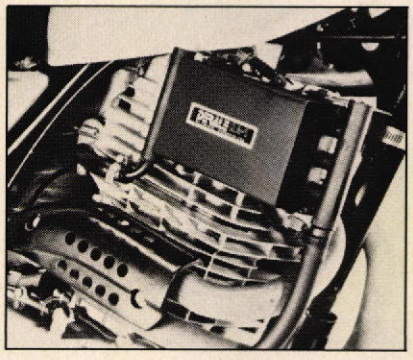
Coming To Grips With Richter: Now you can handle *anything*—high or low design, on almost any motorcycle. Richter makes the bars of stainless or carbon steel, the top-of-the-line being a natural-brushed stainless steel, and all bends are works-style with heliarc-welded crossbars. The carbon steel bars are available in red, yellow, blue or black and are finished with aluminum end caps. Dealers and parts supply shops carry the bars, or you can receive information directly from Richter Industries, Inc., 1355 Lawrence Dr., Suite 204, Newbury Park, California 91320; (805) 498-1519.

Olympic's Tank Bags: Bagging-it in a variety of sizes comes easy with these polyurethane tank bags. They all feature a clear map pouch with adjacent pen pockets, and two styles will convert to become hand bags, shoulder bags or backpacks by using different strap-and-zipper combinations. All the bags are lined, and they're claimed to be washable, waterproof and temperature-resistant. They come with rain covers to protect the black or silver finishes, have reinforced undersides and are secured by fabric straps. Find out more from your dealer or write Bond Associates, Inc., 16931 Knapp St., P.O. Box 2626, Sepulveda, California 91343; (213) 892-0721.



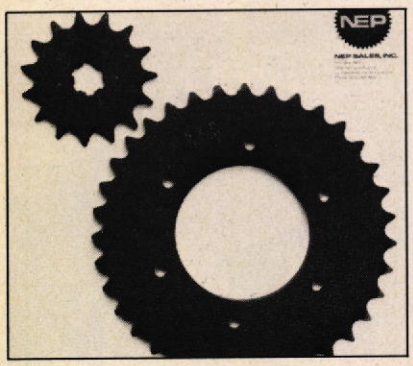
Lazer Lid: This lightweight European helmet features an outer shell of Ronfalin, a patented material claimed to be resistant to solvents and the negative aspects of aging. The faceshield is injection-molded, comes in clear or smoke tint and boasts three easily-adjustable locking positions. For more information write Ritz & Associates, 1417 N. Spaulding Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90046; or phone (213) 851-1343.

Sport Shield: If the fairing of your dreams is more than a windshield but less than a barn door, Slipstreamer may have made what you're seeking. It can be applied to just about any motorcycle, street or touring, and comes in clear or smoke-tint. This universal handlebar-mount shield comes with chrome-steel hardware and can be adjusted to your height. Write Slipstreamer, Inc., 9835 West 69th Street, Eden Prairie, Minnesota 55344. Or you can call (612) 941-9000.



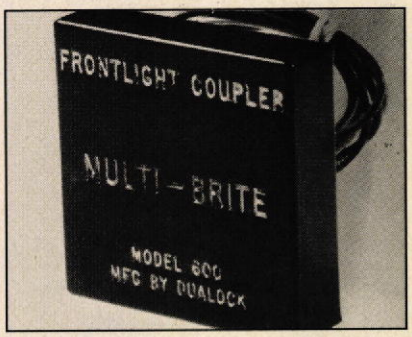
A Scoop of Cool: Maintaining a reasonable oil temperature is especially important with a hard-working off-road engine. So Derale has developed a new oil cooler kit for the Honda XL/XR 250 and 500. It mounts on the side of the bike and has a built-in scoop that forces air through the cooler. This should make it less vulnerable to flying debris than front-mounted coolers. The Derale unit has an automatic temperature-control valve and is constructed from copper tubing with aluminum fins for good heat dissipation with compact size. The suggested retail price is $85.95. Your dealer should have them, or you can contact Derale Oil Coolers, 138 West Gardena Boulevard, Gardena, California 90249.

Yamaha's Spiker Gloves: These new gloves feature ventilation holes both between the fingers and across the top. They have curved fingers and pre-cupped, double thickness palms. Made of cowhide and rubber, the gloves come in yellow, black and white. Spikers are available at Yamaha dealers or directly from Yamaha Parts Distributors, Inc., 6555 Katella Ave., Cypress, California 90630; (714) 761-7678.



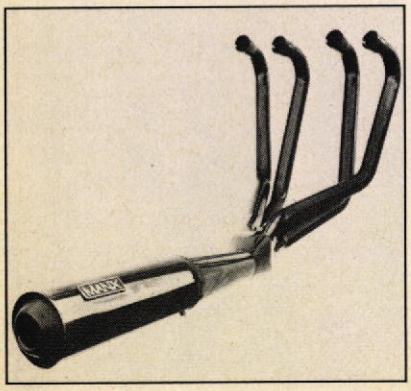
Teeth For Two: Both a front and rear sprocket are included in NEP Tuff-One Combo Kits. NEP reminds you that replacing sprockets when you replace your chain will greatly increase the new chain's life. The Tuff-One package includes a nylon rear sprocket that is lighter than aluminum and corrosion resistant to boot. The countershaft sprocket is made from hardened steel. Check out the Combo-Kit at your dealer or contact NEP Sales, 3439 Ocean View Blvd., Glendale, California 91201.

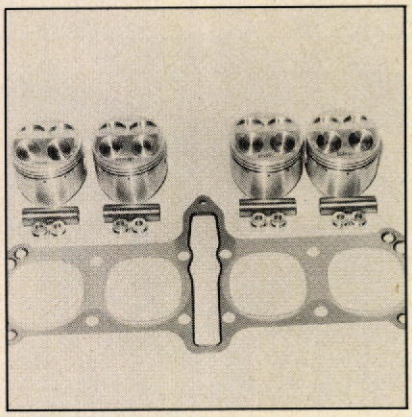
Adding Visibility: Here's a way to change your front turnsignals into running lights without converting them into double-filament bulbs. The Dualock Multi-Brite Frontlight Coupler is a solid-state unit that enables the front turnsignals to glow at partial intensity and still act as normal signals by brightening to full power when you signal a turn. It's small, 2⅜" x 2⅜" x ½", and can fit inside most headlight shells. Suggested retail price is $24.95. For details contact Dualock, 211B South Whisman Road, Mountain View, California 94041.



Vetter Tank Bag: The famous fairing folks are making it easier for you to take it with you when you go. The new 24 liter tank bag can swallow a lot of gear with a 19 liter center section and two 2.5 liter side pockets. The bag is topped off with a clear map pocket which is claimed to be highly resistant to ultra-violet deterioration. A fleece-like synthetic material covers the bottom of the bag to prevent scratching your beautiful gas tank. Suggested retail price for the 24 liter tank bag is $79.95. For more information see your dealer or contact Marketing, Vetter Corporation, Rantoul, Illinois 61866. The phone is (217) 893-9300.

Black Is Beautiful: MCM has just announced a new line of 4-into-1 exhaust systems in basic black. The Black Manx line is billed as genuine black chrome and is said to be durable and easy to clean. Each system offers a weight savings over the stock exhaust and provides full access to oil drain plugs and oil filters. The side- and centerstands can also be retained. Black Manx systems are available for selected models of Honda, Kawasaki, and Suzuki motorcycles. Manx also makes a complete line of replacement mufflers and has recently added luggage racks and safety bars for BMW to its catalog. For more information contact MCM Company, 601 South East Street, Anaheim, California 92805. The toll free number is (800) 854-0473.





GS1100 Big Bore: If you think your Suzuki GS1100 still isn't fast enough, Vance & Hines Racing has something for you. The new 1198cc big bore kit is available in a choice of compression ratios for street and strip, from 10.5:1 all the way to 13.5:1. The 76mm pistons are designed by professional racing tuner Byron Hines and feature three rings and full-circle skirt configuration. Hard-chrome wristpins and aluminum wristpin buttons are included in each kit. The complete piston kits sell for $210. Vance & Hines also offer a complete line of performance parts for the GS1100. For information contact Vance & Hines Racing, 14010 Marquardt Avenue, Santa Fe Springs, California 90670. Or call (213) 921-7461.

The Eyes Have It: National Hydron adds a new model to its line of goggles with the introduction of the Model 900. The new frames are available in popular colors and should fit under all new full-face off-road helmets. The goggle's ventilation is through foam filters and the cloth-backed liners are said to increase comfort. *Lexan* lenses are standard and are treated with either MXL scratch-resistant coating or Hydron anti-fog coating. The Model 900 is also available in a double-lens configuration for cold weather conditions. National Hydron also makes a variety of goggles and shields for other applications. See the complete line at your dealer or contact National Hydron, 1764 Rohrerstown Road, P.O. Box 222, East Petersburg, Pennsylvania 17520.

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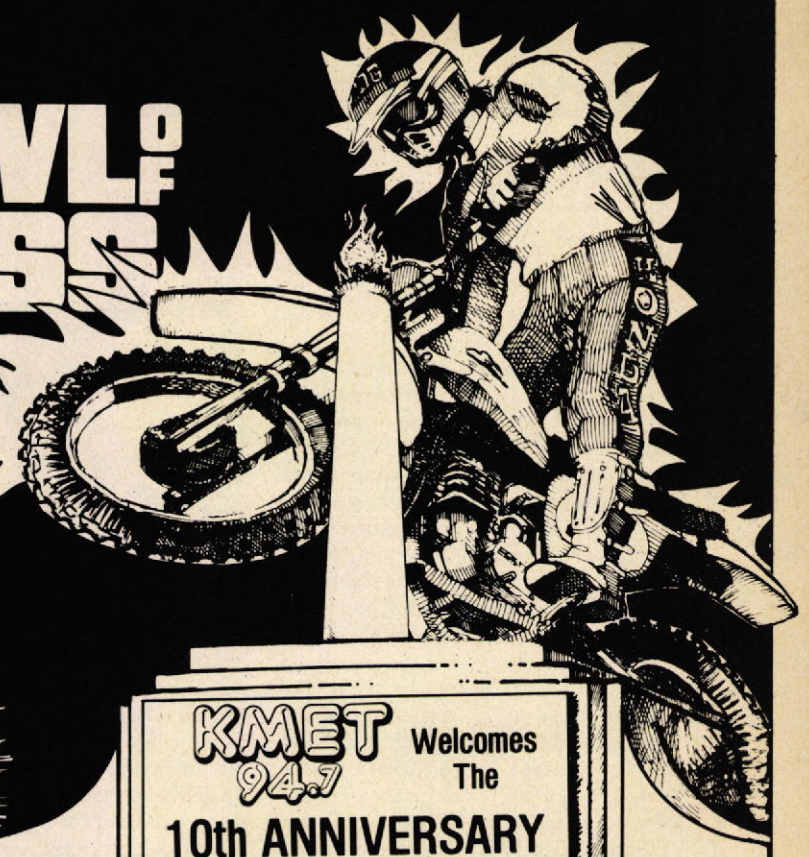

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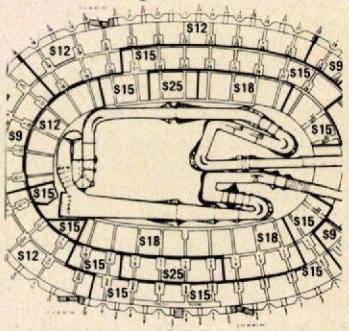

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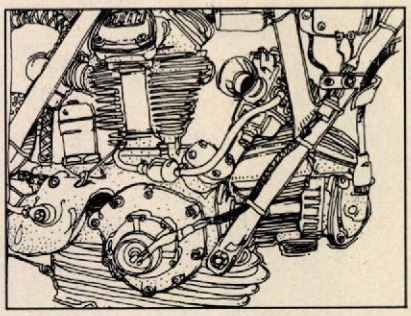
"Tricks? I don't got to show you no stinkin' tricks!"

• Motorcycling is a game of techniques. Everyone will concede that, I think. The ad folks like to imagine that they can lure someone into the game by slick campaigns run in lifestyle publications or even on television. Maybe they can. But every dealer and every player in our game knows that as soon as you throw your leg over that GS1000, the game gets serious. You have to learn the techniques and tricks of survival, and do it with some dedication, if you're to enjoy riding today.

The problem is that, for some unfathomable reason, we motorcyclists hoard our knowledge of the tricks like they were the pieces of the map of the treasure of the Sierra Madre. I've found this I've-got-mine-Jack attitude a serious obstacle to my own development as a rider for years, even though I wasn't even aware of it until recently. For instance, it wasn't until last month, when I was teaching fourteen-year-old Andrew to ride in the dirt that I realized how chary my moto-pals had been with their advice on *working* the bike, as opposed to riding it. This came up because Andrew tried to push a Honda XR100 backward the way he would a bicycle. Naturally, the thing started to arc out of control, so we had five minutes on the fine points of wheeling a bike around. He got it instantly and we went back to riding tricks.

But while he was chugging around the little course we'd laid out, it dawned on me that Andrew was suddenly five years ahead of my development when I was still in my first weeks of moto-madness. Because for the rest of his life, he'd never have to struggle to wheel the thing where he wanted it. Nobody, see, had taken the time to teach me that when I was his age, so I spent years doing it wrong.

By the strange synchronicity that sometimes pervades life, the very next day I had a chance to help a friend's daughter learn some similar tricks. The one she most needed to know was the centerstand technique. Like a huge number of motorcyclists, she had found the stand to be almost impossible to deal with, for what I suspect was the same reason that those other bikers did. She'd swing it down, face forward, grab both grips, hook one toe on the stand lever and heave. Naturally, because in that stance the unconscious tendency is to pull the bike slightly toward you, both stand feet were not down and locked. And naturally, the geometry of her heave being all wrong, the effort was immense, and she always gave up. Result: As far as she was concerned, the centerstand was the instrument of the devil, a wasted appurtenance. I showed her the right stance then showed her how to deliver all her weight smoothly into the lever, using her left hand only to guide the bike, and, of course, she popped the XS400 onto its stand the first time.



You guessed it. I hadn't learned the trick until I'd been riding for years. In fact, I know motomag writers who still don't know it.

Why? Other hardware-intensive diversions that I've dabbled in have never been quite as permeated with people who didn't know and wouldn't help. Even in the Right-Stuff ridden world of aviation, in which neophytes are considered dangerous nuisances, hard-bitten old ex-fighter jocks will help a struggling novice park his Cessna the quick way.

This unique and irritating quality of our world so bothered me that I began to conduct one of my famous One Man Surveys. I pestered all my motorcycling friends, asking them where and when and how they learned this or that trick, finally leading up to querying them about how well they felt we disseminated the knowledge we'd gained to others in the game. The results surprised me; I'd expected a few people to have had the same spotty exposure to the tricks as I, but in fact, every single guy I spoke with agreed that it seemed to take a long time of wandering in the wilderness before he found a particular Technique-Truth.

Clearly, there's something wrong here. Is it the underlying machismo of motorcycling that drives all this? Is it our obsessive desire to look good, to look expert, to never admit we don't know the best way to do something? If this is the case, it's fairly easy to see how it comes about. Let's say you're on a group ride somewhere. On the road, you always seem to fall behind in the twisties. And then, at food stops, you struggle and curse and can't quite get your bike up on its stand. Think about it: Inside the restaurant, who's going to critique your cornering problem? Maybe you're doing some thing or combination of things wrong, slowing you down. Or maybe you're just more safety-conscious than they are. You *know*, though, that unless you scratch your head and admit your ignorance, nobody is going to say anything, except in an offhand, semi-joking way. The same goes for your centerstand problem; unless you ask, even the guys who know won't say anything.

What you're reduced to is a kind of corner-of-your-eye observation. You have to watch the fastest, most expert riders and do whatever they do, in other words. It's a chancy business, because you can wind up desperately attempting to emulate the performance of some guy without knowing, really *knowing*, the elements of his expertise. On a racetrack, it results in riding way over your head, usually when a faster rider passes you. On the road, it can mean the same, with far more tragic potential consequences—if you overcook Turn Four out of overreaching, at least a medico is somewhere near. On the road, the same overcook can put you into a Winnebago's radiator grille.

Like most Big Issues, this matter of passing the knowledge seemed to become interconnected with other Big Issues. Perhaps the same sense of *lookin-good* that keeps the squid down the street on that ratty RD350 (you know the kid; seventeen, wears purple Thom McAn jock shoes, jeans, a Who T-shirt, no helmet, no gloves) from finding out that the noisy, ugly pipes he's bolted on the thing just flat don't work is the same sense that keeps him from buying a good helmet. Or even from actually learning how to ride well. That kid is doomed to a life of struggle with bikes, and it may not even be his fault. It may be ours, collectively.

So what to do? Frankly, I've got no idea. You can't base thundering sermons on One Man Surveys. All I know is that for me, the quest for techniques and tricks is a never-ending process, almost as interesting as the ride itself.

And insofar as dealing with the Big Issue is concerned, I figure all I can do is show Andrew what I've found to work. Then it's up to him. —*Steve Thompson*

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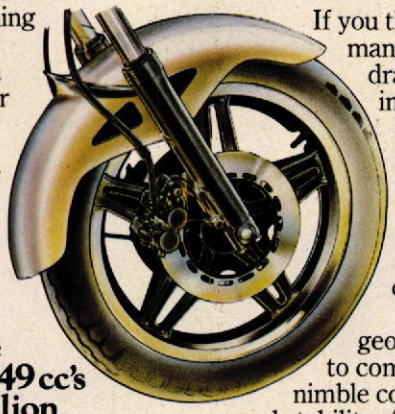
But while everyone else has been playing catch up, trying to match the performance of the CB750F, Honda has not been resting on the machine's laurels.

So when you see the ever increasing flood of claims that one bike or another is a match for the CB750F, Honda would like you to keep one thing firmly in mind.

The 1981 Honda CB750F is even better than ever.



Both the dual front and single rear disc brakes feature Honda's new twin piston calipers.

Four-cylinders, 16 valves, double overhead cams, 749 cc's and maybe a million high-performance miles.

The CB750F engine is not the newest design in its class – merely the most advanced. It features the Honda Pentroof™ combustion chamber design for central spark plug placement and high combustion efficiency. Four valves per cylinder enhance clean burning of fuel and efficient exhaust. And the direct valve system, because it is lighter than a rocker arm system, allows higher engine rpm's and minimizes valve float. And of course, less weight is always a consideration on a high-performance machine.

The double overhead cams are driven by dual multiplate chains, which are both strong and long-wearing.

Carburetion is by four 30 mm constant velocity units with an accelerator pump for quick, crisp throttle response. Transistorized pointless ignition delivers a reliable, hot spark throughout the engine's performance range. And never needs adjustment or other maintenance.

The exhaust system is a highly efficient four-into-two.

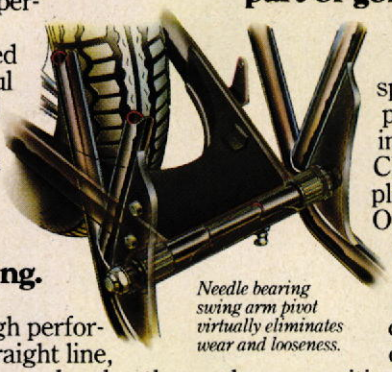
This is the engine that is the basis for Team Honda's Superbike road racers. The engine that has propelled the CB750F to its rightful place as king of the 750 class performance machines. It is a proven performer.

Some new twists on handling.

If you think high performance is straight line, dragstrip speed and nothing else, read no further. Because to the CB750F, high performance means the quickest way to get from point A to point B, regardless of how many curves are in between.

Start with frame geometry, designed to combine quick, nimble cornering and high-speed stability. Add new 37 mm air adjustable front forks. With an equalizer to facilitate filling.

A needle bearing swing arm pivot provides precise alignment, vitally important to proper handling. And the new Honda VHD™ shocks are adjustable 30 ways to match load, road and riding conditions. The highlighted black ComStar™ wheels are mounted with wider than ever tubeless tires for a bigger footprint on the road.



Needle bearing swing arm pivot virtually eliminates wear and looseness.

A crucial part of going-stopping.

High performance sport riding requires precise, effective braking. The Honda CB750F utilizes a triple disc brake system. One slotted disc in the rear, two slotted discs in front. All with twin piston calipers, for added caliper rigidity and more positive feel.

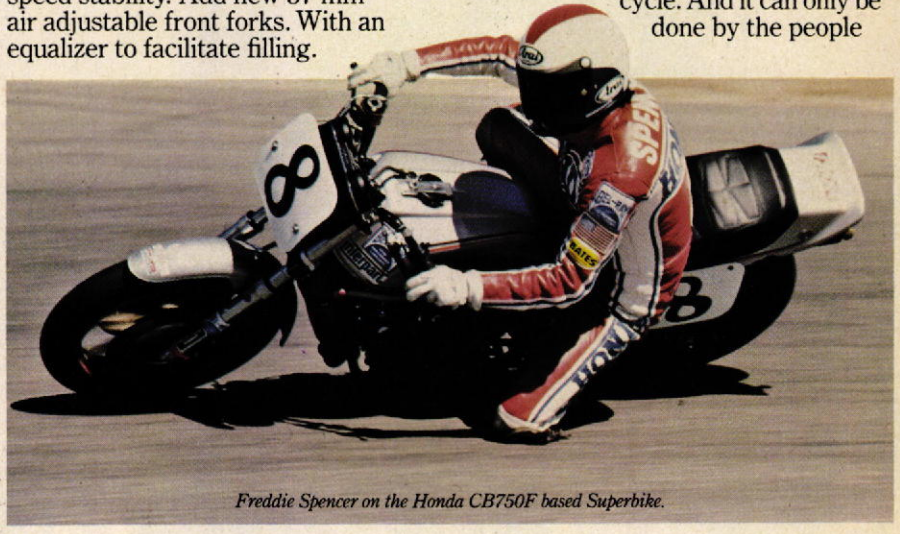
One thing no company can build into a bike. A reputation.

No motorcycle rolls off the assembly line a proven winner. Most simply roll on into oblivion.

It takes years to build a reputation as a high performance motorcycle. And it can only be done by the people who know and ride and talk about this kind of motorcycle.

If you know one of these people, see what he has to say about the Honda CB750F.

If you are one of these people, you already know.



Freddie Spencer on the Honda CB750F based Superbike.

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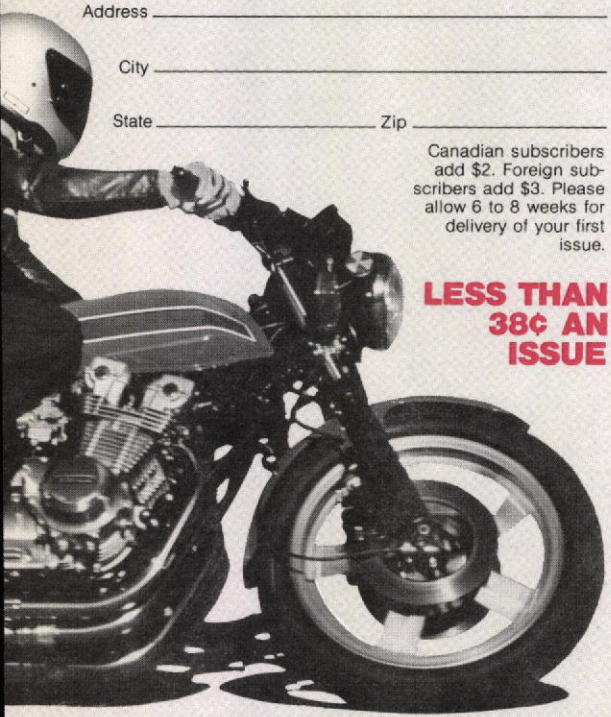

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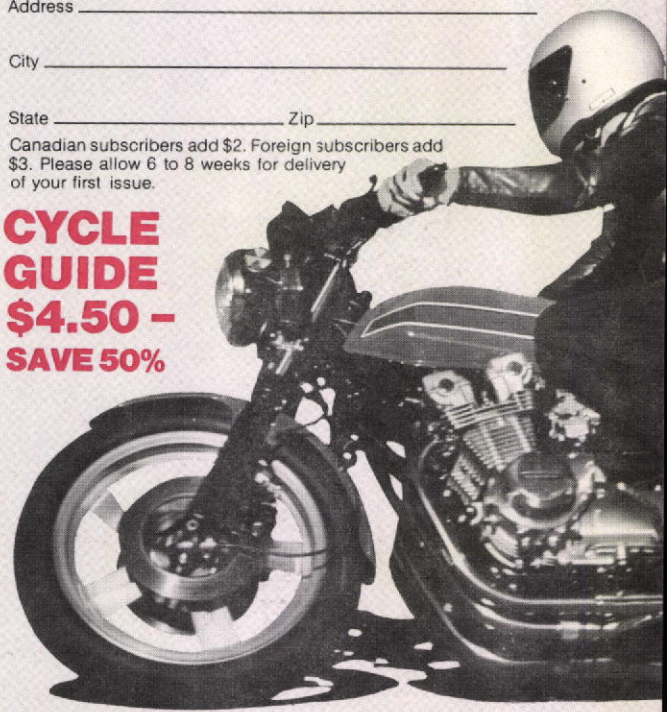

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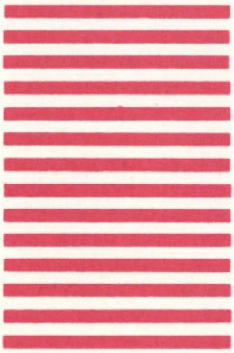

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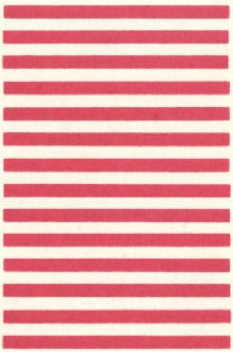

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West's Side

Ride With Mr. Hyde

View from the inside, looking in.

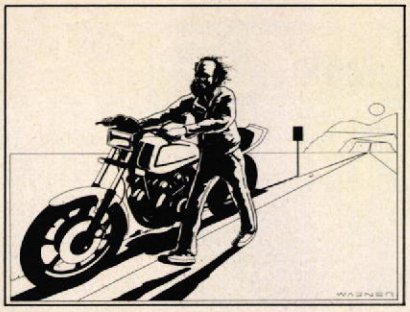
• The window display was a whorehouse of the mind. There were black leather wristbands and belts coated with layers of sharp-edged silver studs, black T-shirts with death's-heads across their fronts, black lapel buttons that read, "Ride Till You Die" and "Born To Lose" and so on. And everything in black—always black.

Yet, for all the slobbering, loathsome craziness of this window, there was something slobberingly, loathsomely fascinating about it as well. I don't know what that "something" is—not an underlying current of mental health, certainly—but even for those of us who wouldn't be caught dead admitting it, there is something irresistible about windows like this. It's like the windows of War Memorabilia shops. Like them, because all of the same suppressed, deflected craziness was operating in the window of this little black-leather-and-silver-studs motorcycle paraphernalia shop on MacDougal St. in Greenwich Village. There's another shop just like it on St. Mark's Place in the East Village (I know 'em all), they're both called—what else?—"The Pit," and both have the same lurid fascination. All there is to attract people's attention is a death's-head in the window . . . and the promise of dementia for sale inside.

I stood next to a couple of young guys outside the MacDougal St. window the other Saturday night and I felt like I was standing next to John Hinckley waiting to greet President Reagan. They were pleasant-looking guys wearing faded jeans and old Levi jackets—relatively clean, relatively un-bloodstained. But then one grabbed the other and said, "Hey, lookie here—gotta have me one of those!" It was a black T-shirt with mug shots of a skull and an identification tag around the neck that read, "FTW 13-69."

I beat a circumspect retreat, feeling inexplicably threatened. I mean, how do you figure it? They didn't look like freaks or freelance child-molesters, yet here they were, lusting after a T-shirt I wouldn't use to clean up after my dog.

Sure, you can put it all down to Punk, I suppose. The trouble is, this same Outlaw Biker madness was around long before the Sex Pistols were anything more than a zit on their mother's cheek. I have no idea exactly when it all began—some say just after World War II—but no matter when or where, I'm not revealing any secrets when I say that it's been intimately connected with motorcycles ever since.



God knows, nothing in American society remains stationary. Fads come and go, hemlines climb and plummet, hair goes long and short, yet after nearly 35 long years in a constantly changing America, there exists a motorcycle paraphernalia shop in Greenwich Village that is still selling the *exact same image* it would have been selling in 1949! To me, that is astonishing.

Astonishing, and more—it makes me mad. Very mad.

Ah, but then, why mad? If it's got nothing whatsoever to do with me, why should I care about it at all? After all, a T-shirt is no threat to my civil liberties. A leather wristband never beat anybody up. Why do they generate such anger in me, then?

Walking along MacDougal toward Bleecker, I had to think about that. Something was going on here that didn't make clear sense. If I get mad at a snarling dog, it's not because I'm mad at him, really, it's because I'm afraid he'll bite me. The more often I look closely at things that make me angry, the more often I find that my anger is just a mask for some kind of fear that I don't want to admit is there.

Yes, yes, Dr. Jekyll, but you still haven't answered the question—why do black leather wristbands with sharp-edged silver studs make you angry? Or, as you insist, afraid? Hell, you don't even *own* one!

No, it wasn't the paraphernalia itself, then. It was something more general, something that applies not just to guys on choppers, but to Middle Class schnooks on commuter bikes and café racers—something that applies to *me*.

I couldn't make it out. It wasn't until I crossed Washington Square and headed up Fifth Ave. that I saw it. A guy on an old Honda 750 with clip-ons and a café fairing came racing through the night, his headlight slicing a slalom course through the logjam of taxis and Studebakers, exhaust blaring off the walls of the luxury apartment buildings above Washington Square, racing to beat the entire world. I watched him for an instant without thinking anything was strange about it. If I'd been him, I'd have been riding exactly the same way—I always did—slicing through traffic like a hot knife through ice cream. Perfectly normal.

And perfectly abnormal.

That was when I saw it—only a biker would *dream* of riding that way in traffic. Only a biker would *dream* it was "normal." Walking along watching, as I was, it looks completely cuckoo. Yet when you're in the saddle, there seems only one emotion available—raw aggression. From the first time I felt even moderately at home on a bike, I rode that way, as aggressively as my fear would allow. And in a flash of realization, I suddenly saw why—it was fear, transmuted to anger. Down deep—and having seen it once now, there is no denying it—I hate the vulnerability I feel being a biker amongst automobiles. *Hate* it. Makes me so afraid that, though I refuse to let myself feel it as fear, I turn it into raging aggression, just exactly as this guy on the Honda 750 was doing. On a bike, I'm Dr. Jekyll turned to Mr. Hyde. I'm *paying back* those cars, every one that I pass, for making me so afraid.

Finally, then, it all began to make sense. Whether I'm on a café racer or a commuter bike or a Special, whenever I'm in automobile traffic, I feel threatened. At the core of it, I feel like an outlaw, someone who must compulsively *get even* with the world—the automobile world, in this case—for making me so afraid. In other words, I've just as surely got a chip of black-leather rage on my shoulder as the scuzziest chopper rider in Pacoima.

And that's why the display window on MacDougal St. made me mad. It was telling me something about myself I didn't want to hear—that *I too* am in that window display. And judging from the amazing longevity of American Outlaw Biker imagery, there must be many, many others of us who feel the same fear-laced anger. Maybe even you.

Of course, I'm not here to tell you what you feel. In me, though, I've discovered some black-leather riding habits I would just as soon be rid of. And for that realization, I have no one to thank but the weird, raging little window display I found on MacDougal St., "The Pit." —*Ted West*

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GUIDE LINES

Cycle Guide's Monthly Chronicle of Scoops, Tips, Rumors and Hard Facts

BY RILEY THARP

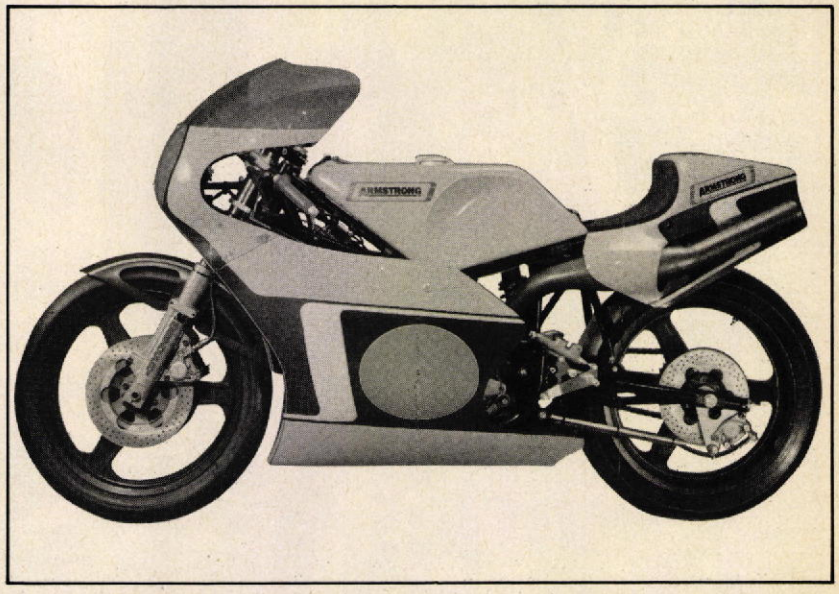
COMING SOON

• It's easy to get discouraged about **racing** before you even get started. Motocross bikes are often competitive right out of the crate, but other kinds of racers must often be purchased bit by trick bit from the right sources. That's **expensive,** time-consuming and leaves lots of opportunities for mistakes. Yamaha has made roadracing **reachable** by marketing finished machines, and now more companies are starting to get into the act.

Armstrong's CM35, a ready-to-race GP machine out of Britain, enters the **fray** with a list of impressive credentials. The 250cc machine is powered by a rotary-valve, water-cooled twin built by Rotax, the Austrian engine manufacturer. A Marzocchi fork with adjustable damping is standard, and the rear suspension is a single-shock, rising-rate system. The frame is made from **chromemoly** tubing, and rolls on Dymag magnesium wheels. Triple Brembo discs do the stopping. Considering its lack of development time, the CM35 is doing well in 1981, and is already **competitive** with Yamaha's all-new TZ250H. While the Armstrong's hefty pricetag of nearly $9000 might put off a few customers, its an easier way to go racing than the do-it-yourself method.

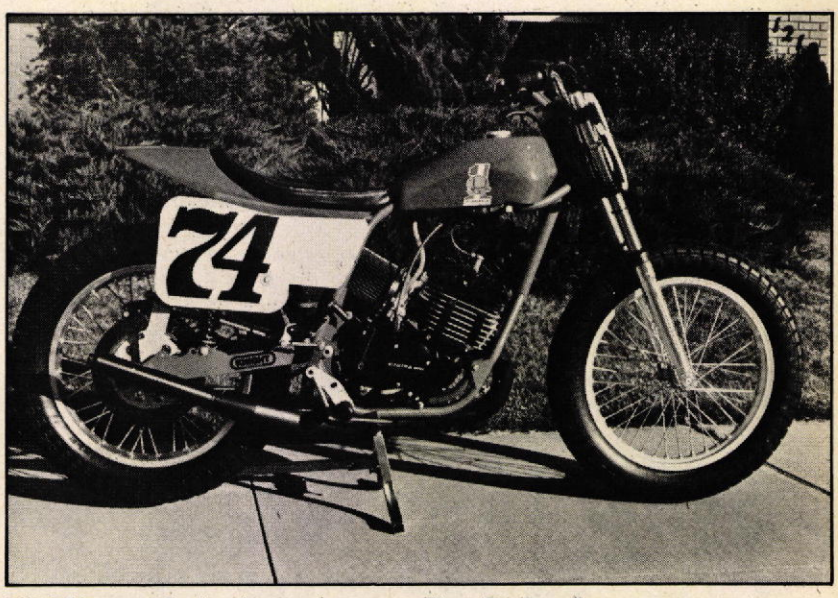
• Shortracking is another form of racing that has traditionally required assembling the bike from components made by a number of manufacturers. Now Slater Brothers is marketing a complete **shorttracker** made by Cagiva, the Italian company created from the remains of the Harley-Davidson and Aermacchi consortium. The frame is made by the experienced designers at Knight Racing, and the engine is tuned by Cagiva for the **demands** of short-track competition. Dry weight is claimed to be less than 200 pounds, and the entire package sells for $3295. It's another machine that could take some of the hassle out of getting started in racing.

• Northern Illinois University is offering a series of **courses** this summer in motorcycle **trail** riding. The week-long novice workshop includes the use of a bike and gear, while the experienced rider workshop requires that the student bring a motorcycle. Prices range from $55 to $120, and all classes are held on approved trails in the Manistee National Forest in west-central Michigan. For more information contact Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois 60115. The courses were created to improve trail riding **technique,** and because research indicates that experienced trail riders are involved in fewer street riding accidents.



Armstrong CM35, a Rotax-powered water-cooled threat to TZ250 supremacy

Open the box and race.



Sub-200-pound Cagiva shorttracker enters Slater Brothers line

The non-do-it-yourselfer's answer to getting sideways.

• Here's a **tiddler** that sounds like fun: Are you ready for a Suzuki RG50 with disc brakes, mag wheels and anti-dive fork? It's not sold in the U.S., but could it be tomorrow's **hyperbike?**

• Here's a bike that falls at just about the **opposite** end of the motorcycle spectrum. HRD Motorcycles of Italy has just introduced

Continued

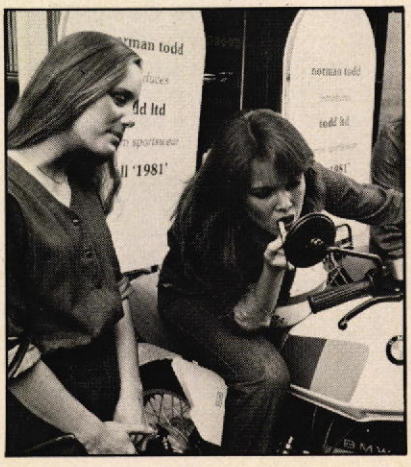
Babes On Wheels

Wanted: Young females. Must ride motorcycle, be photogenic.

• What's a cross between the Goodyear Blimp and the Folies Bérgère? Give up? The answer is Les Motesses, a brand-new, all-female motorcycle drill team based in Los Angeles. Their job is enviable: riding for money. What better show-stopper for an ad agency than 15 beautiful girls dressed in coordinated costumes wheeling matched motorcycles down Main Street U.S.A.?

The Motess, Inc., of Los Angeles, is an offspring from the original French drill team, Les Motesses, which was founded almost by accident nine years ago in Paris. In 1969, female motorcyclists were an anomaly in Paris—especially tall beauties like Marie-Hélène Geinger. At the time, she was working as a model for an advertising agency and dating a motorcyclist. So, why not beat the Parisian rush hour, she thought, by riding a motorcycle to work? She was more than just noticed by other motorists—even during rush hour. Fashion designers began to enlist her to wear their newest creations on her way to work. When this began happening regularly, her boss asked her the key question: "Do you know any other female motorcyclists?" She quickly (and wisely) replied that she did. But this beauty had brains. She didn't tell him how many she knew (one). Instead, she managed to round up eight more motesses within a week.

Ricard, the French aperitif, became the team's first sponsor, and the madamoiselles continued to ride as freelancers until four years ago when Geinger formed the corporation, Les Motesses. They are as much a household name in France as the Goodyear Blimp is in this country. The multi-media coverage they provide for advertisers is responsible in part for their fame. But, just as important, the French government has borrowed the celebrated group to put on mo-



torcycle safety demonstrations. Two years ago, the team had its American debut in Washington D.C., to the delight of that city and its myriad motorcycle deliverers.

Geinger's business sense led her to collaborate with her longtime friend, lawyer and Los Angelino Brigitte Segal, to form an American branch of the Motess team. The 10 young women who are now members were nearly all weeded out from applicants responding to an ad in *Cycle News*. Segal demands a set of qualifications that aren't often found in a single person: beauty, riding expertise and a sense of responsibility.

To be placed on the team, the girls were interviewed and given a parking lot audition. Segal stresses the importance of slow, precise riding ability rather than trick riding. Most of the riders she chooses have had extensive motorcycling experience—including racing—and nearly all of them have a background of dirt riding. Candy, for instance, has been riding for 12 years and has raced dirt bikes; Barb, who tends bar in Vegas when she isn't on a bike, is sponsored in dragracing and won her most recent race. When asked why they decided to run away and join a drill team, the young women invariably responded with some version of, "Because riding is so much fun." And Laura, who owns a Sportster, added that she looked forward to riding with other women for a change. But, if it's difficult to find the right female motorcyclist to fill a niche in the team, it's just as hard to woo a potential sponsor.

Many companies are reluctant to be the first to join what seems to them a radical bandwagon. On the second of April the team rode white BMWs through the center of Los Angeles modeling Norman Todd sportswear for their first sponsor. They also appeared in a feature for *Apparel News* in February. Even so, the group is still looking for a motorcycle manufacturer to sponsor them on team motorcycles (Segal indicates that Yamaha is a leading contender) of at least 500cc but not more than 900cc. They are also itching for innovative advertisers so they can try out their pyramid—on TV. Les Motesses of France has had its share of unusual jobs as well as their staple, advertising. They've been asked to escort rock stars from Orly airport, for example, to their studios or homes. With Hollywood just around the corner from the U.S. team, can sponsorship be far away?

Segal is confident that The Motess, Inc. will be a success. She looks forward to the day she can have some riders working full-time and some working part-time, and to the possibility of going on tour. To her, the group is more than a great promotion stunt for advertisers. It's a way to promote respect for motorcyclists from drivers. After all, what could be threatening about a pretty girl on a motorcycle? —*Merry MacTavish*

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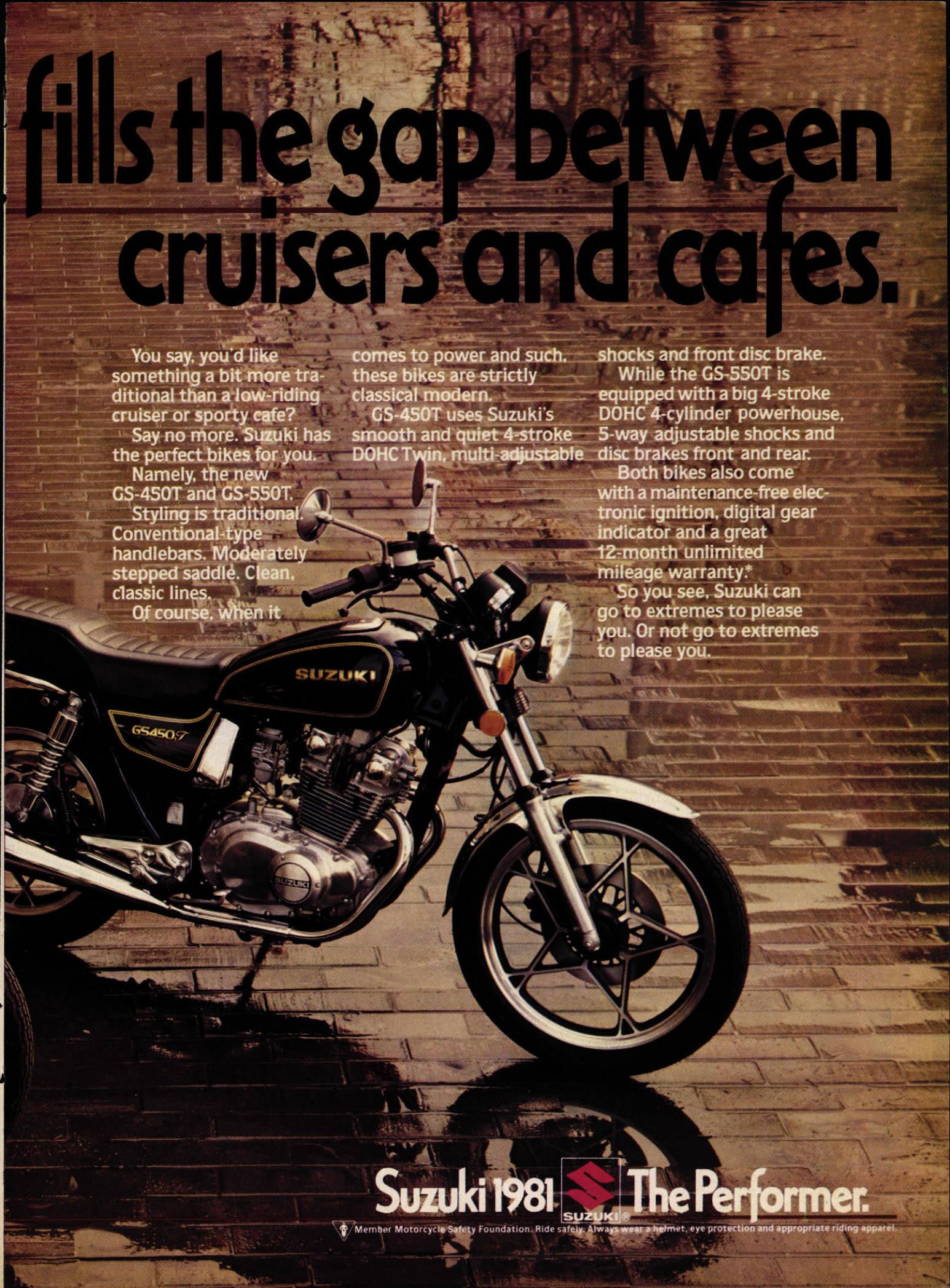

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Matching Leathers courtesy BATES

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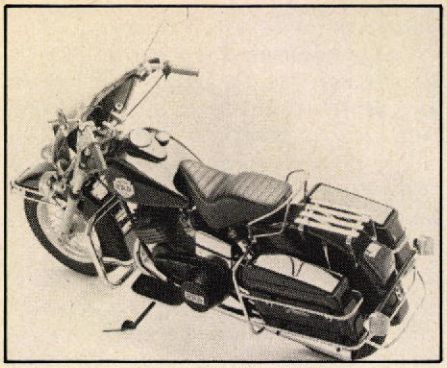

Florida—just the ticket for piglets

Electra-Glide in baby blue.

the **Florida,** a child's 50cc bike patterned after a Harley-Davidson police model. The Florida is amazingly authentic from fairing to fenders to floorboards, and it even comes standard with saddlebags and bag guards. If Federal regulations didn't prevent importation of the Florida, every **Shriner** in the country would probably have one inside of six months.

• Finding quality **fuel** for your Florida, or for any vehicle, could get a lot tougher in a few years according to an article published recently in Technology Review. Gasoline and diesel fuel are likely to contain ever-increasing amounts of **impurities,** such as sulpher and nitrogen, as refiners attempt to increase the yield from crude oil and reduce the energy consumed in the refining process. Current engine designs have fairly **strict** fuel requirements, so manufacturers might be forced to turn to new technology in developing engines that perform well on a wider range of fuel grades. Significant **deterioration** of fuel quality could begin by the mid-1980s.

FEDERAL CASES

• Continuous review of spurious regulations by the Reagan administration could soon mean the end of 85-mph speedometers. One of several regulations recently recommended for **dissolution** is the speedometer readout standard which mandates the current 85-mph maximum on speedo faces. Proponents of the regulation claim that current speedometers reduce the **temptation** to test the limits of a vehicle's performance, while its detractors say the 85 mph readout doesn't give any perspective of the real speed and danger for anyone intent on going fast. And this time the anti-regulation forces appear to have won.

• Very few, if any, bikers have lamented Joan Claybrook's **departure** from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and for good reason. Ms. Claybrook's vehement anti-motorcycle stance was a clear **threat** to riders' rights. But things are looking better since the appointment of Raymond A. Peck, Jr. as head of NHTSA. During his recent confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate, Mr. Peck stated that he will soon undergo formal motorcycle rider **training.** Now that's a switch. Mr. Peck also indicated that motorcycle **safety** programs will receive

Continued

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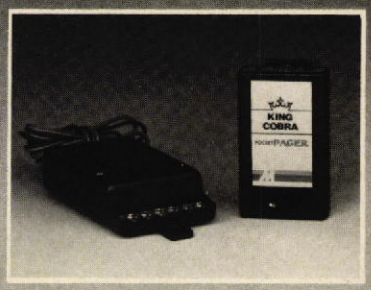

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attention by the Reagan administration.

• A bit of **backward** thinking was recently defeated in Indiana. House Bill H-1321 would have **prohibited** more than four motorcyclists from **traveling** in a group. That's right, just riding with four other bikers would have made you a criminal in Indiana had the bill passed, but clear vision prevailed and it was **defeated** in committee.

• Obtaining your motorcycle **license** could be less of a **problem** this year because of a new test course approved by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation for its Motorcycle Operators Skill Test. For states that don't have room for enough of the 50 x 125-foot facilities, an alternate course has been created for a 28x72-foot area. This should allow states to have more test areas than before. Indeed, the new method has been adopted by Kansas and New Hampshire, and is used as an alternate in Oregon, Washington and South Dakota.

• One source of good news could spring from the Republican platform plank calling for the **abolition** of the 55-mph speed limit. The idea is likely to be opposed by both conservationists and environmentalists, but since Reagan is a proponent of states' rights, the national speed limit could still be in jeopardy. A bill introduced in New Mexico, which would have raised the speed limit there to **65 mph,** died in the legislature because of the fear of losing federal highway funds. That's just the kind of federal **blackmail** to which Reagan claims he is opposed, but the indications are that the movement is off to a slow start. It's probably too early to start tinkering with gear ratios for autobahn-style cruising.

• The new man in the White House could affect other **changes** on motorcycling as well. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) recently stated that the EPA's noise standards for motorcycles will be some of the first regulations examined in an effort to **eliminate** those that are not cost-effective to meet or monitor. The AMA has stated that it is prepared to assist and advise the OMB in its efforts to **remove** inflationary and unreasonable aspects of the current EPA regulations.

HARD CASH

• The current trend toward **cutbacks** in government spending could mean you'll have a **rougher** ride next time you go touring. Why? A recent study revealed that more than one-fourth of the 40,000 miles of Interstate pavement currently in service is in need of some sort of **repair** or restoration. The same study says that this figure is growing by as much as 1600 miles each year. At the same time, decreased gas consumption has reduced the revenue taken in by the government's fuel tax, so less money is available for repairs. And now that the Fed is more reluctant to make up the difference, things might get pretty **choppy** on the superslabs.

• BMW is showing signs of **health** with the announcement of a new, **$18 million** assembly plant in West Berlin. The plant will be

Continued

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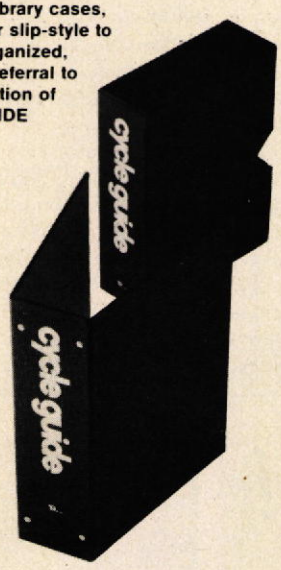

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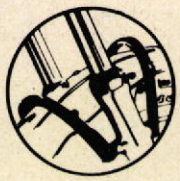

- ★ Currently being run on Police Edition Kawasakis in Northern California.
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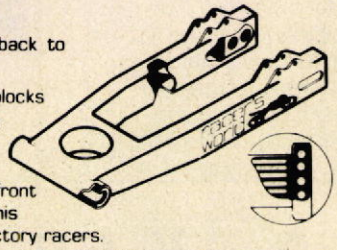

- ★ Constructed of two 1½" square tubes welded piggyback to greatly increase rigidity.
- ★ Solid aluminum adjustment blocks improve swing arm strength over standard swing arm axle mounts.
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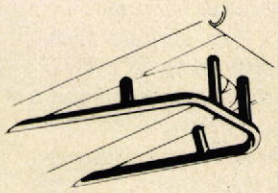

- ★ Only a fraction of the cost of a complete aftermarket swing arm.
- ★ Greatly improves the handling characteristics of your stock swing arm.
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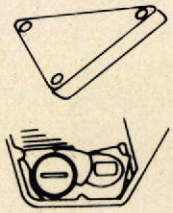

- ★ Designed to replace the light duty stock mounts and bolts.
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- ★ Available for Kawasaki 900 and 1000.

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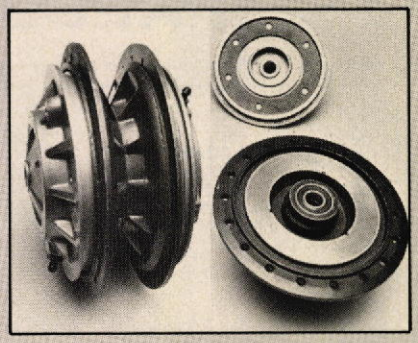
HI TECH:
S.F.D.I. Integrated Discs

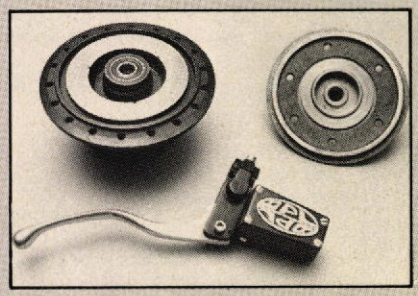
Braking the French connection.

• Disc and drum brakes both have their own appealing features, but neither is ideal for every application. Discs rule the street world—where they still suffer from water-proofing problems—and drums dominate dirt use, but often lack sheer stopping power. Well, two French brothers, Philippe and Denis Luchier, have now come up with what they claim is the perfect combination of disc and drum that not only works well on *and* off the road, but also combines the two brakes' better features.

S.F.D.I.'s integrated discs, at first sight, might be mistaken for regular motocross drums, with a conical aluminum hub enclosed by a form-fitting backing plate. Only the absence of a brake arm suggests that something is different. But things look ever stranger when the backing plate is removed.

Inside the drum is a vertically-mounted braking surface, much like a regular disc rotor, but hidden internally. The backing plate, too, is unusual because it has only one shoe—and that shoe, like the hubs' braking surface, is mounted vertically on the backing plate.





The backing plate, while prevented from rotating like a regular brake, is free to move horizontally on a center core. Hydraulic fluid fills the small sealed void between the backing plate and center core, and when the brake lever is squeezed, fluid forces the backing plate inward to press against the hub-mounted disc.

The designers claim the integrated disc weighs the same as most motocross hubs, while providing much greater braking forces. And because the brake area is mounted vertically, the disc automatically centrifuges water and mud out of harm's way, letting the brake work even when drenched. The brake also has the more manageable "feel" of a drum brake associated with none of the numbness normally found with hydraulic discs.

Front hubs have already been tested on Frenchman Patrick Fura's 500GP Husqvarna, and a rear hub will be tested soon. And prototypes have already been cast for a larger twin-sided hub for street use. If that is accepted in the street market, the Luchier brothers may well have found the ideal combination of disc and drum that works in any application. *—David Dewhurst*

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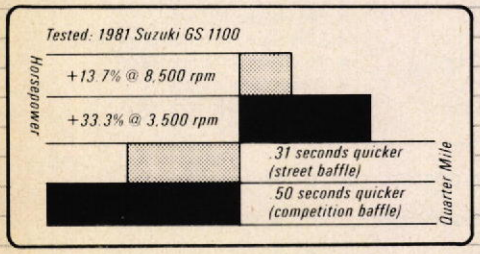

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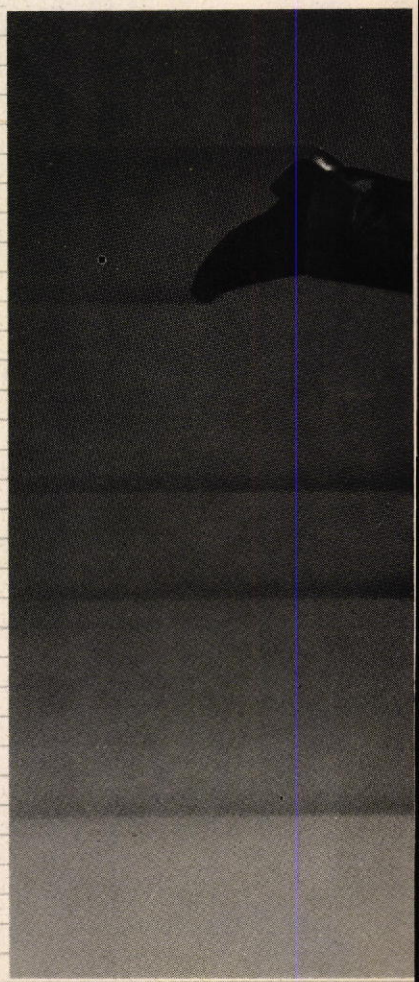

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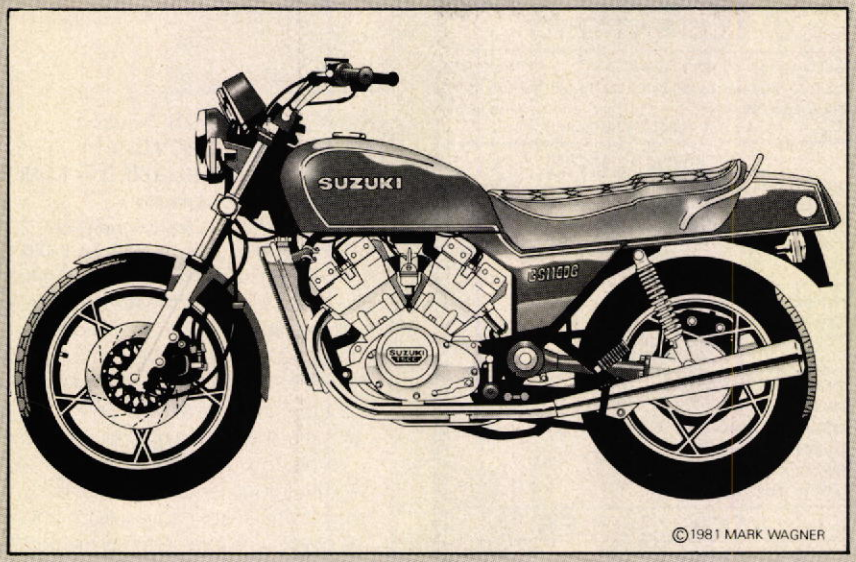
RUMORBIKE:

Suzuki Vee Four

Is this the top-line tourer for 1982?



• Everybody is used to four-cylinder bikes by now, but Suzuki could become the first modern manufacturer to cut one in half and make a vee. Yamaha tempted industry watchers a few years ago by unveiling a prototype vee-four endurance racer, which started a wave of rumors that a street version would soon follow. Indeed, a machine similar to that prototype could still see life as a replacement for the aging XS11, but Yamaha must move quickly to be first if rumors of the imminent Suzuki release are correct.

Vee-four engines have an obvious advantage in width which allows the powerplant to be mounted low in the frame without sacrificing cornering clearance. But compared to an in-line four, a vee configuration suffers a few disadvantages. Cam drive, intake plumbing and the exhaust system are all more complex than on a transverse four, and a vee would require watercooling because of the smothered rear bank of cylinders. Vee fours aren't noted for smoothness, and that's why Saab was forced to use a balancing shaft on its automotive vee four. Suzuki might use staggered crank journals, a balancing shaft or rubber mounting to quell vibration.

But whatever the drawbacks, Suzuki's rumored vee-four concept has one big advantage—it's different. Getting customers to *notice* a bike is a big hurdle in selling a new machine, and a vee-four tourer could be just the ticket to lure Gold Wing loyalists into the Suzuki camp. —*Riley Tharp*

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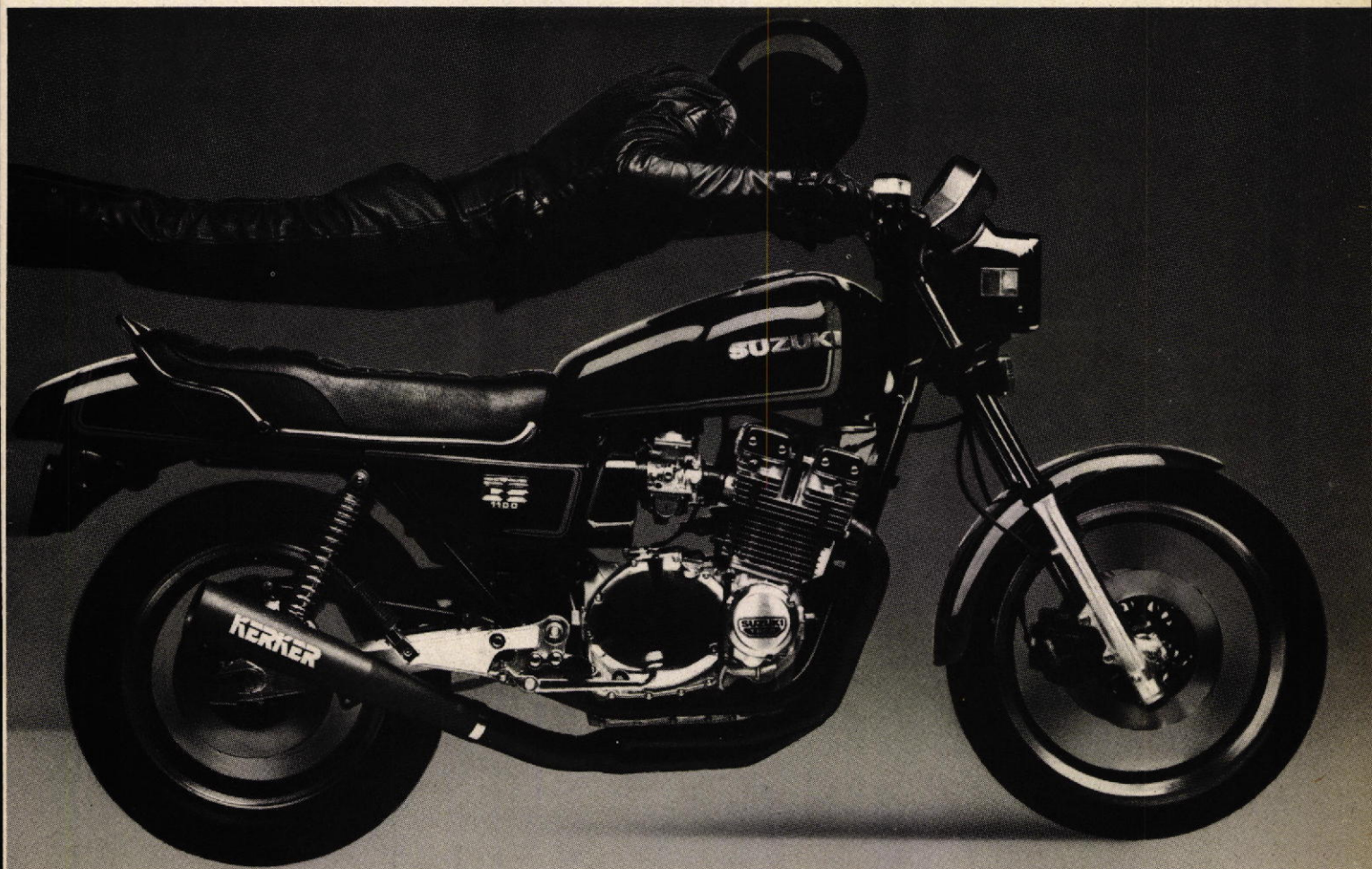

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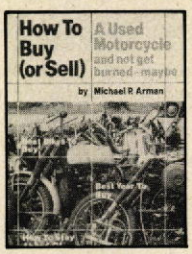

HOW TO BUY (OR SELL) A USED MOTORCYCLE AND NOT GET BURNED—MAYBE
by Michael P. Arman
72 pages, $4.95 Aztec Corporation
P.O. Box 50046 Tucson, Arizona 85703

• While you're thumbing through a magazine full of shiny new machinery, it's easy to forget about all the used bikes that are bought and sold every year. A lot of riders choose to let someone else take the depreciation on a new bike, and some just can't afford the price of a new machine.

"How to Buy a Used Bike" strives to help the inexperienced buyer select a motorcycle that won't be a disappointment. The opening chapter defends the purchase of a used bike as a cost-effective alternative to a new machine, and subsequent chapters deal with selection, registration and insurance. Further discussion about financing, repair and eventual resale round out the book, but the 72-page primer can hardly be described as packed with information. The chapter on interpretation and identification of serial numbers is thorough, but the chapter containing a mechanical checklist moves too quickly and raises more questions than it answers. If the reader knows enough about bikes to understand the lengthy checklist, then he probably doesn't need this book. Conversely, just having a long list won't help a beginner to make an accurate determination. Some good photos could clarify where to look and what to look for, yet only three photos appear in the long checklist chapter.

If the huge list of possible mechanical pitfalls doesn't scare the reader, then the sections on financing, insuring and registering a used bike surely will. The author teeters on the edge of hopeless paranoia, and paints an unrealistically grim picture of every salesman, clerk and adjustor a buyer is likely to encounter.

For all its shortcomings, however, the book contains some pearls of wisdom. The author knows bikes even if he can't spell (it's MV Agusta, not "Augusta"), and that knowledge shows up occasionally in his book. If you don't know anything about bikes, if you don't trust anyone to help you and you are about to buy a used bike, then you're probably better off having this book for reference. But if you take it with you when you shop, take it with a grain of salt.

—Riley Tharp

used mainly for motorcycles, although some car components will also be made in the new facility.

• A sales **trend** that hasn't changed is the decreasing popularity of dual-purpose bikes. Back in 1972, dirt/street machines represented more than 41 percent of the new-bike market. That's been **declining** steadily to a level of just 9.7 percent in 1980, according to the same MIC study. All of those DT-1s and F-11s are just statistics now.

• Army olive drab just might look like the color of **money** to the folks at Can-Am. The Bombardier subsidiary has just announced its fourth contract with the Belgian Armed Forces which secures the sale of **$4 million** worth of military bikes and spares. That brings Belgium's bill with Can-Am to $15 million in the last four years. **War** might be hell, but it's sure good for the economy.

• Kreidler, the West German moped and motorcycle manufacturer, could use some Army money right now. It is reported to be in serious financial **trouble,** and is currently negotiating wage concessions with the labor force in an effort to **salvage** the company. Kreidler's racing department is owned by the Dutch Van Veen company, and is financially secure.

RUMORS

• Are you tired of waiting for a factory **turbobike** that never comes, and are you just a little sick of hearing about all the turbos you can't yet buy? Well, according to rumors from The Right Sources, all the waiting is just about over. In fact, if the latest rumors are correct, you'll have quite a **choice** of high-pressure bikes for 1982.

• Suzuki is the **newest** member in the turbo ranks, and European sources say that a 650cc turbo is a sure thing. But until the factory **confirms** the existence of the bike, it remains a tantalizing rumor. Suzuki's Twin-Dome combustion chamber design, as used on the current 650s, is claimed to be quite resistant to detonation, which would make it a good choice for turbocharging.

• Another rumor that is being touted as a sure thing by several British sources is the impending **release** of the Honda **CX500 Turbo** (*CG,* January '81). The bike will reportedly be on sale in spring or early summer of '82, and will fall into the same price range as the CBX.

• Last of the turbo-talk comes from Yamaha, and word about the tuning fork factory is of a possible **pair** of air-squeezers. The XS11 Turbo (*CG,* April '81) is a sure thing for limited **production,** but the latest word is that it could be joined by a Seca 550 Turbo. Stories of a Seca response to Kawasaki's GPz550 have been around for a while, but the rumor of a turbo **attack** on middleweight performance is a new approach.

• If riding around on a turbocharged machine doesn't get you enough attention, then how about a new **paint** job? Highly **reflective** paint is rumored to be under development in the U.S., and it is said to make vehicles more

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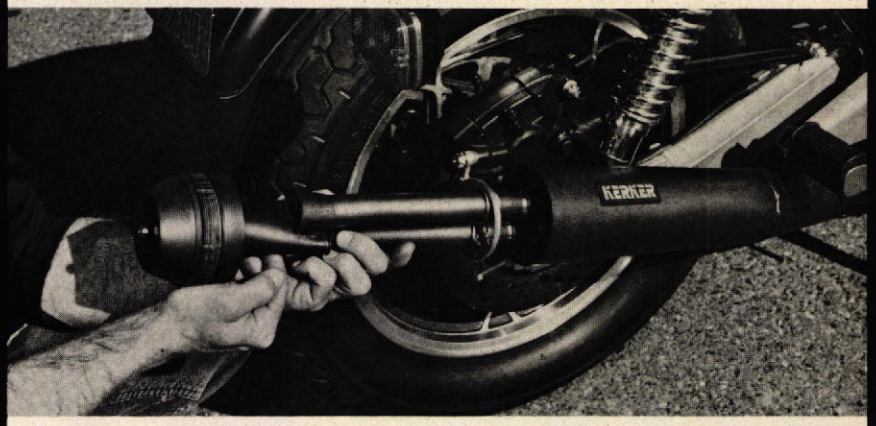

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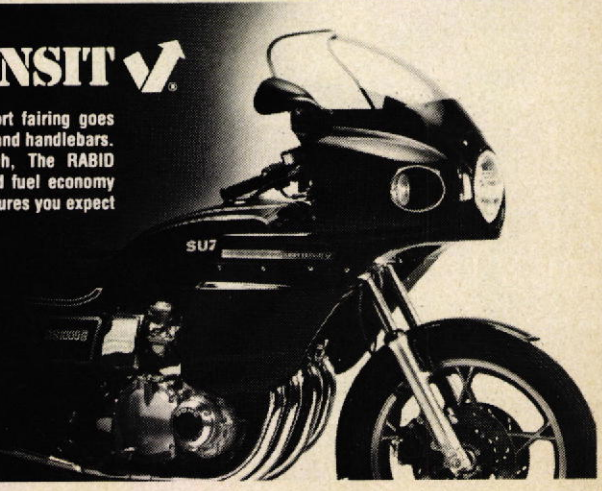

HAVE YOU FELT THE PANIC OF MUSHY CORNERING?

You go into a corner, lay the bike over and what do you feel?
The miserable mushies.
You can avoid the miserable mushies. One way would be to check your shocks. Mushy corners usually mean bad shocks. It's easy to test your shocks.

HERE ARE FOUR WAYS TO TEST YOUR SHOCKS:

1. Check your odometer. OEM shocks (factory) on production bikes with more than 5000 miles are likely candidates for the trash pile.
2. Mushy corners. Rear wheel wants to do its own thing.
3. Extra bounces after going over a bump. More bounce to the ounce.
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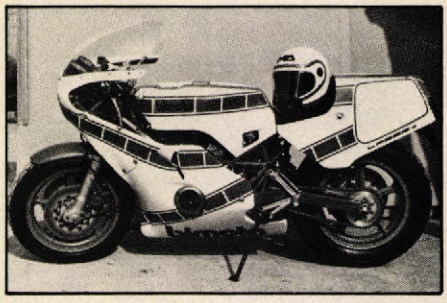
conspicuous without the use of extra lights and reflectors. The finish would look normal under full-spectrum light from the sun, but when struck by car headlights its reflectivity, or albedo, would be far greater than regular paint. What a bright idea.

• BMW is back in the rumor mill with word from England that the **four-cylinder** prototype is being secretly tested in West Germany. The same sources say that BMW will put the bike into **production** in late '82, and that they will begin arriving in dealer showrooms in early 1983. The new design, code-named the K4, is powered by an in-line, water-cooled four that rests nearly on its side in the chassis. The bike is also said to be equipped with **anti-skid** brakes, a motorcycling first. Rather than replacing BMW's familiar boxer twins, the new machine is said to be a top-of-the-line addition to BMW's offerings.



Bimota/Kawasaki deal is in the wind

But Kawasaki calls it just hot air.

• Strange financial dealings are underway between two very different motorcycle makers. Bimota, the Italian frame builder, and Kawasaki Heavy Industries of Japan are **conspiring** to produce Kawasaki-powered Bimotas. Word from England is that Kawasaki would like to market the machines in an effort to go a step beyond Suzuki's Katana bikes, so the Bimota-Kawasakis would feature **radical** frame designs as well as **sport** styling. Distribution of the bikes could be a source of conflict since Bimota boss Giueseppe Morri wants engines with Bimota casting marks, along with a strong role in marketing the machines, while Kawasaki wants clear definition of the new bikes as Kawasaki-powered and Kawasaki-endorsed. The report has triggered speculation that the Bimota-Kawasakis could be fitted with existing EPA-legal engines and **distributed** in limited quantities in the **U.S.**

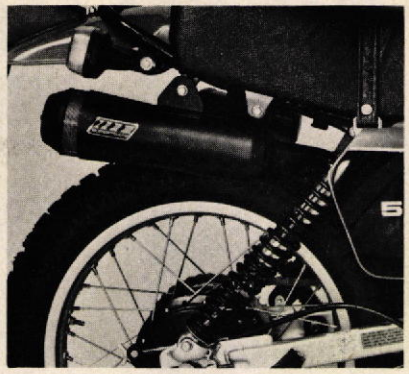
• Low riders could take on a whole new look if the roadracing trend to 16-inch **front wheels** finds its way onto street machinery. Suzuki is rumored to be readying a super-low version of its GS450 which will ride on 16-inchers in the rear *and* the front.

• Another bike that might also undergo a **major facelift** is the Suzuki GN400. A BSA Goldstar-like creation could be based on the 400cc **thumper.** Perhaps Suzuki is ready to challenge Yamaha's near-monopoly of the repli-bike market.

• Look for a number of commuter-style machines to be outfitted with **belt** drive in the next model year. The system is a fairly inex-

Continued

The Sound Solution



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On Honda 500-cc Pro-Links and smaller-displacement dirt bikes, you'll get very similar results, plus the standard SuperTrapp benefits: maintenance-free, all-mechanical construction; Forest Service-approved spark arrestor; no packing to burn out or replace; clearance for knobbies; and bolt-on installation in minutes using factory mounts.

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4M-3250	Honda XL/XR 250 except Pro-Link
4M-3500	Honda XR/XL 500 except Pro-Link
4M-3501	Honda XR 250R & XR 500 Pro-Link
4M-4250	Yamaha XT/TT 250 (complete system)
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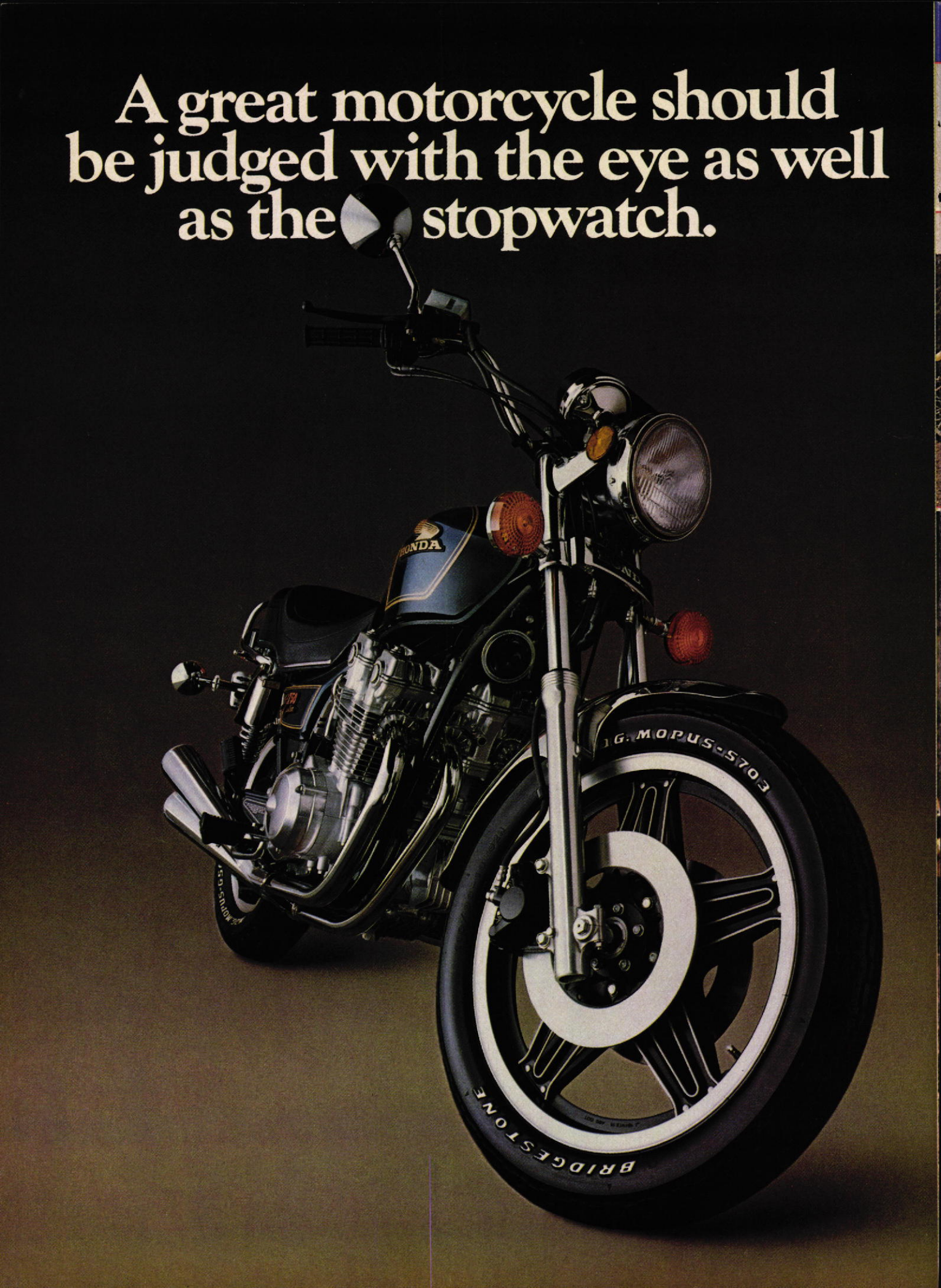
A great motorcycle should be judged with the eye as well as the stopwatch.



The quarter mile might tell you how fast a motorcycle can move, but there's something it can never tell you.

How much a motorcycle can move you.

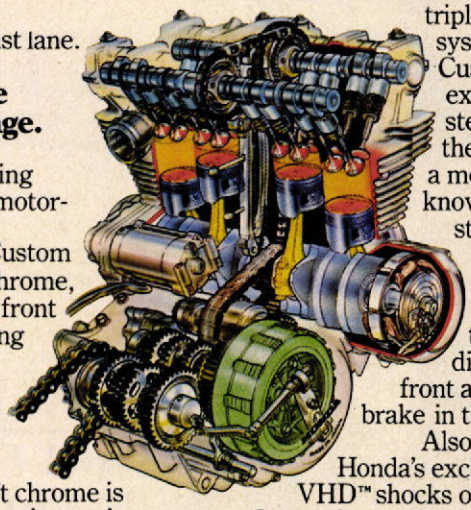
Honda presents the 1981 CB750 Custom, one of the most beautiful motorcycles to ever roll out of the showroom.

Or into the fast lane.

Chrome on the range.

This is a shining example of how a motorcycle should look.

The CB750 Custom is a symphony of chrome, from the gleaming front fender to the glowing taillight.

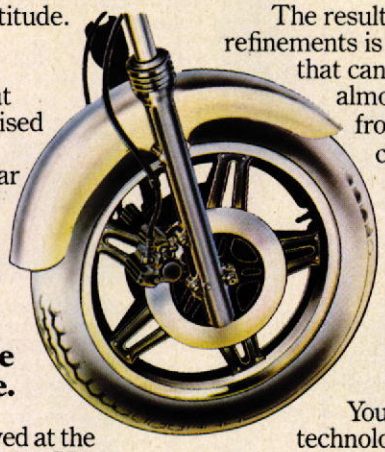


Perhaps the most advanced custom 750 on the road.

And what isn't chrome is the deepest richest paint you've ever seen on a production machine. In fact, to get two-tone paint like this, you either buy a Honda Custom or you buy a custom paint job.

But underneath all this dazzle, don't be surprised if you discover a slightly aggressive attitude. The CB750 Custom rides on clean lean ComStars™ and big fat tubeless tires with raised white letters.

Like a muscle car on two wheels.



Rakish new leading axle forks with dual disc brakes.

Lean back and enjoy the performance.

Now you've arrived at the most beautiful part of the CB750 Custom.

Riding it.

The handlebars and footpegs let you lean back comfortably instead of hunching forward.

The saddle sinks you down to just 29.9 inches off the ground. So you don't have to stand on tip-toe at stoplights.

Stretching out in front, the new leading axle fork gives you more than a rakish look. It's air adjustable, so you can tune it to load and road conditions. The ingenious offset triple steering clamp system lets this Custom retain almost exactly the same steering geometry as the Honda CB750F, a motorcycle well-known for its ability to straighten curves.

And because stopping is as important as going, there are now dual disc brakes in the front and a brawny drum brake in the back.

Also in back, Honda's exclusive VHD™ shocks offer you five spring preload settings – from limousine plush to road racer stiff.

And a swing arm pivot fitted with needle bearings reduces flex in tight corners.

The result of these refinements is a motorcycle that can handle almost anything from a hairpin curve to a double S. Luxuriously.

Even its muscles have muscles.

You're looking at the technological cousin of Honda's famous superbike racers.

It features 749 cc's of four-stroke, four-cylinder power, complete with high tech touches like no-maintenance transistorized pointless ignition, double overhead cams, multiplate cam chains and a forged crankshaft with Kelmet racing bearings.

Inside the cylinder heads, you'll find Honda's unique Pentroof™ combustion chambers. With a direct valve system that reduces maintenance and four valves per cylinder, instead of two, to reduce valve float and improve breathing at higher rpm's.

Which translates into considerably more power at higher rpm's.

And to make sure you get all that power, smoothly and without waiting, the four 30 mm CV carburetors are fitted with an accelerator pump for quick, crisp throttle response.

Just roll it on.

Tricks and treats.

The CB750 Custom is beautiful in big ways.

It's beautiful in small ways, too.

This year there's a quartz halogen headlight and new trick instrument lighting that doesn't just light up. It glows. Vibration-absorbing passenger footpegs. There's even a vacuum operated fuel petcock that you never have to remember to turn on or off.

But this is just the icing on the cake. Without a single gadget, this motorcycle combines pure beauty with brute force so well that you don't know whether to polish it or polish off the competition.

The CB750 Custom.

A moving experience even when it's standing still.

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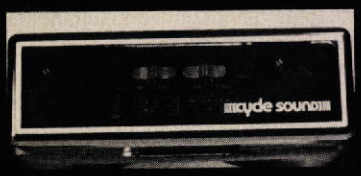

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pensive **conversion** for the manufacturer to make, and the resulting low-maintenance drivetrain is appealing for everyday riders.

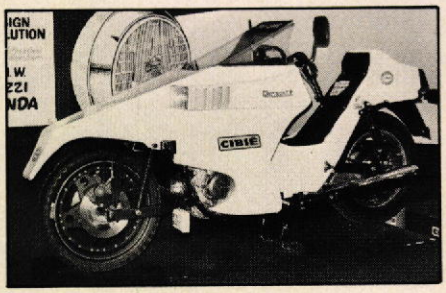
• Fully enclosed **chains** could gain popularity as well. Protecting the chain from dirt and water while providing constant lubrication can double or triple the chain's life. For **frugal** consumers, the decrease in cost and maintenance might be worth the somewhat clunky looks.

• A far more **bizarre** driveline rumor is of a fluid coupling system for MXers. Such a system was tried a few years ago, but horsepower losses were deemed too great. The idea uses an engine-driven **pump** to force highly pressurized hydraulic fluid through flexible lines to an impeller inside the rear hub. New developments in the system are rumored to make it more efficient and lighter. Will your next motocrosser churn out 90 over 120 at the rear wheel?

• Another off-road rumor tells of **tubeless** tires filled with self-sealing **foam,** which could make flats a thing of the past.

APART FROM THE CROWD

• Quasar is at it again, this time with a semi-enclosed machine based on a Kawasaki 1300. The new prototype features a single **reclining** seat and center-hub steering. Styling was inspired by an **aardvark.**



Kawasaki-powered convertible Quasar

Answer to a question no one asked.

• Here's a bit of sobering thought: As the operator of a motor vehicle, you are a participant in the second most expensive health **hazard** in town. Second in cost only to cancer, motor vehicle accidents of all kinds in the U.S. cost more than **$14 billion** per year.

• One small statistic that bears repeating comes from the USC accident researching of Harry Hurt. **1.9 seconds** is the average time you have to see, react to and avoid an accident on the road—or fail to avoid the **accident.** In the time it took you to read this item, you could have participated in, or avoided, five scenes of highway mayhem.

• The 1981 **Masochists** Award must surely go to Italian journalist Roberto Patrignani who recently rode a **moped** from Charleston, South Carolina all the way to Los Angeles, California. It's something to think about next time your turn-key tourer gets a little **uncomfortable** on a long day's ride. ●

ROAD TEST:

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 RICH COX

Honda Silver Wing Interstate

Take a long, hard look. Is this the touring bike of tomorrow?

BY LARRY WORKS

Continued

Everyone knows that a touring bike is a touring bike is a touring bike. Most are the way they are—more engine than an Allis-Chalmers tractor and more sheer tonnage than the U.S.S. Nimitz—because that time-honored formula is the best way to make them work. It's common knowledge around the Million Milers' Club. Ask anyone; they'll tell you.

As usual, everyone is wrong. The proof of that wrongness lies exposed for public viewing in Honda's GL500 Interstate, an almost-solo tourer with less engine and less bulk than any other factory turn-key tourer and more pure touring *stuff* than all but one other long-hauler.

You'll recognize the trappings of a CX500 lurking under all that touring gear, but to grow a full-fledged tourer out of the humble beginnings of a CX took some doing—and a few years of development. Shortly after the Gold Wing Interstate went onto Honda's drawing boards in 1978, the Silver Wing followed suit. What emerged from that planning was more than a slick method of using the CX500 one more time to recoup its heavy tooling costs. The Silver Wing Interstate that came off of that drawing board is the first new approach to touring in years.

Since any radical changes to the CX500 would have required expensive recertification of the engine, the transformation from CX-D model to GL involved relatively little engine work. Which means that, by and large, the power for the Silver Wing comes from the same CX engine that Honda introduced in 1978, a water-cooled 80-degree vee-twin with four pushrod-operated valves per cylinder. The 1981 GL even has the same gear ratios as the CX500D. But while the engine is still clearly identifiable as a CX, it took some changes to bring it up to GL-spec.

For one, the GL abandons the CX's Tri-Pulser magneto-type CDI in favor of a transistorized pointless electronic ignition. The GL's ignition draws off of the battery instead of being a magneto-type CDI, thereby fostering easier starting by giving off a stronger spark at low cranking speeds. The GL's alternator, too, has been beefed up from the CX's 170 watts to a 252-watt capacity, to better handle the electrical requirements of accessory touring gear such as gauges and lights. And in a change made to lengthen the service life of the clutch damper system, steel springs took the place of the CX's rubber shock dampers in the GL's clutch hub.

While the CX engine translated more or less directly into the GL500, the chassis underwent more substantive changes. First, the engine location was brought for-

ward 30mm and lowered slightly, which moved the protruding vee-twin cylinder heads from the knee-knocking position they had on the CX. The two 34mm Keihin constant-vacuum carburetors also moved out of the way, close together up above the gearbox on 30mm-longer inlet tracts. The carbs now draw air from a new airbox through a common, branched rubber hose.

Without a doubt, though, the single most noticeable change applied in making the GL from the CX was the substitution of Honda's single-shock Pro-Link rear suspension for the CX's conventional twin-shock setup. Right now, Pro-Link is a trendy marketing tool (read sales feature), but the GL's rocker-linkage rear suspension is more than just a catchy trademark stenciled on a swingarm. Pro-Link gives the GL a rising-rate suspension capable of handling a wide variety of loads and roads—just the ticket for a mid-size touring bike that might be ridden one-up, two-up or heavily laden across a broad range of road surfaces. In addition, Pro-Link fits in nicely with Honda's practice of "mass centralization," the notion that grouping as much of the bike's weight as possible at or near the machine's center of gravity will only improve its overall handling.

The GL is a natural for Pro-Link, since the engine is relatively short, front-to-back. But because the Pro-Link shock and linkage system is mounted in front of the rear wheel, extra space was still required to accommodate the system, even on the GL. Part of the room came from repositioning the engine, while the rest came from stretching the GL's swingarm to 30mm longer than the CX-D unit. As a result of both changes, the GL's driveshaft was lengthened 2.4 inches. The Showa air/spring shock at the heart of the GL's Pro-Link is adjustable for air pressure only, in a range of 0–70 psi, through a valve located inboard of the right side cover. Although the shock has no damping adjustments, it *is* rebuildable, which means that its damping characteristics can be altered by changing the viscosity of its oil.

Even though the Pro-Link's no-shock looks will draw most of the attention, not all of the suspension work went into the GL's rear end. The diameter of the GL's stanchion tubes was increased by 2mm to 35mm, and the new tubes were set 10mm farther apart in new triple clamps, yielding a more rigid fork assembly. Inside the new fork tubes, triple-rate springs and a pair of Honda's Syntallic bushings per fork leg work to offer progressive forking with a minimum of friction. Reduced spring preload and less rebound damping are also part of the conversion from CX-D to long-haul GL, as are air caps joined by a balance tube with a filler at the right fork crown. The GL also gets some new steering geometry to set it off from the CX, in the form of a steering head angle more than a degree shallower, and also in 12mm more trail. Together with the stretched swingarm, the geometry changes give the GL slower steering and a wheelbase 40mm longer than that of the CX-D, more in keeping with the GL's intended touring nature.

One last change made to the front end of the GL is the addition of Honda's new twin-piston brake calipers, a change made to seven models in Honda's 1981 line. Each of the new calipers has two small pistons in place of one larger conventional unit. The

Continued

paired pistons act on a long puck that has a larger area than the pucks on Honda's previous disc brake systems. And because the long and narrow puck is mounted farther from the center of the disc rotor than a single-piston design, it has a greater mechanical advantage. A side benefit of the twin-piston design is a caliper more resistant to flexing under heavy braking. And a direct benefit of the Interstate's twin-piston, double-disc front brakes, in concert with its rod-operated drum rear brake, is straight, sure braking—even when the bike's touring gear is loaded to the brim.

And that will probably be put to the test often, since the Interstate fairly bristles with touring appurtenances. Most noticeable, certainly, is the injection-molded fairing, which is identical except for the lowers to the one first seen on last year's Gold Wing Interstate. Most of the large street bikes in Honda's line can be fitted with the same fairing, but Honda spokesmen say that a new windsplitter is on the way and that the Silver Wing will probably be the last new bike to use this model. Optional gear for the fairing includes a removeable Clarion signal-seeking AM/FM radio—along with the speakers, antenna and the electronics to make it work—and a discrete bank of four gauges that reveal not only the ebb and flow of the GL's electrical system but also the ambient temperature, altitude and time. In a display of current fairing vogue, the Interstate has a shatterproof Lexan windscreen, two adjustable air vents and a pair of storage compartments, one lockable and the other covered by a snap-on tonneau. Both the radio tuner (the amp and power booster stay nestled deep in the bowels of the fairing) and the storage compartment unlock with the ignition key.

That same key opens the saddlebags and travel trunk. Having only one key to keep track of simplifies things considerably, but it's really the last thing about the Silver Wing's luggage system that passes for simple. An elaborate mounting system was devised to locate both the saddlebags and travel trunk. At its core lie two chromed arms beneath the seat that are grab rail, helmet locks, latches for the seat/travel trunk (see related story page 45) and saddlebag rear mounts for the Silver Wing. But "complex" isn't necessarily an indict-

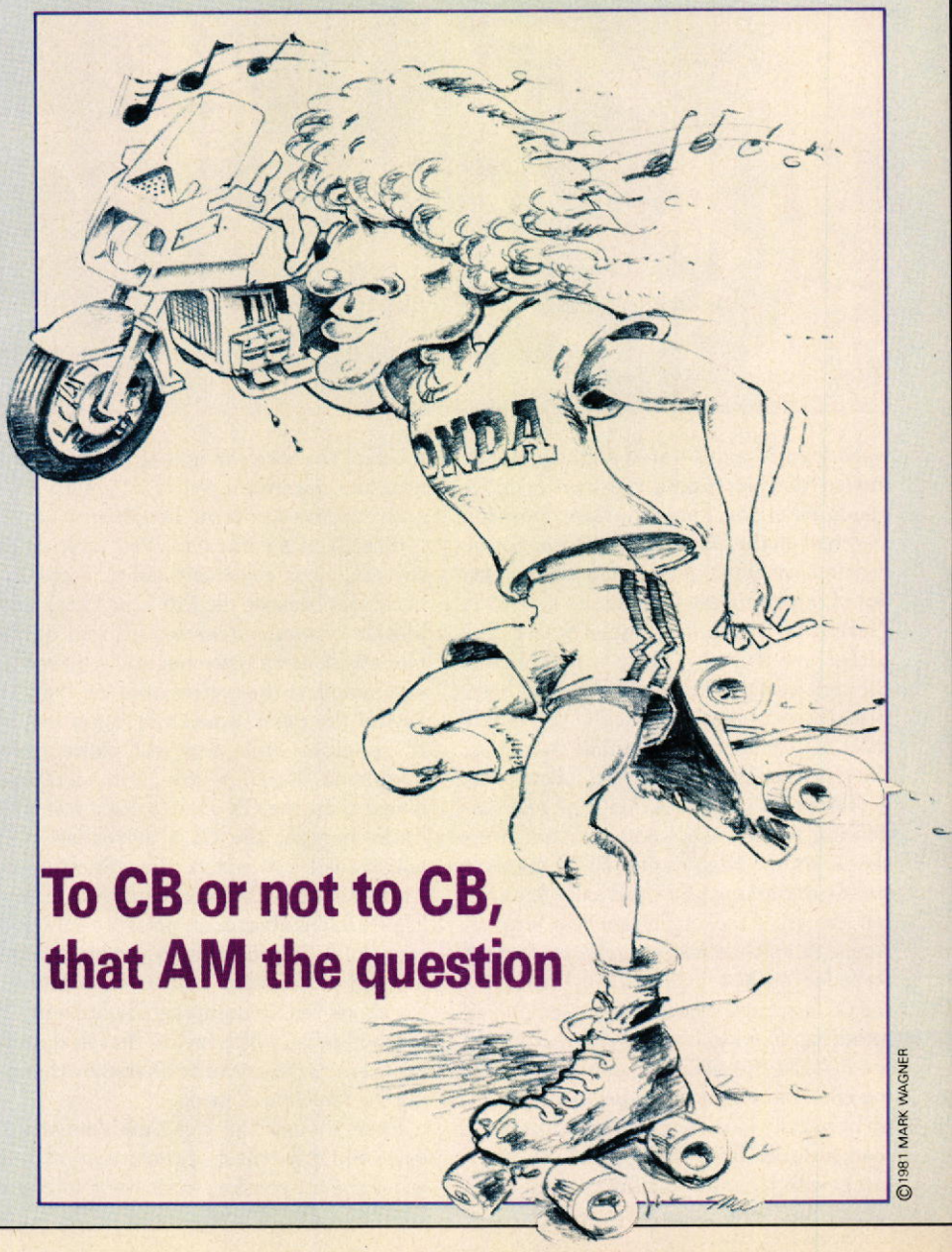
To CB or not to CB, that AM the question

• I suppose it's not easy for some people to summon much enthusiasm for the electronic lights and flashes like those available for Honda's Interstates. Motorcyclists have a long tradition of combating the eccentricities of spark ignition, and a fundamental mistrust of electrons is a part of our racial unconscious as a result. But now that modern motorcycles have introduced us to automatic electricity, I've overcome my fear of the electron. In fact, I regard lights and flashes as essential to modern motorcycling.

Consider Interstate 10 between San Bernardino and Phoenix. There's not enough visual stimulation out there to keep the mind alive. A little music on the radio eases the tedium. A radio can also update you on the weather. And who says purple mountain's majesty doesn't deserve symphonic accompaniment? I have trouble relating to CB radio, though, especially since the airwaves have been trashed by the ravings of pseudo-truckers. But I figure the CB is still a good emergency back-up and for getting directions, even if full-time listening rots the brain.

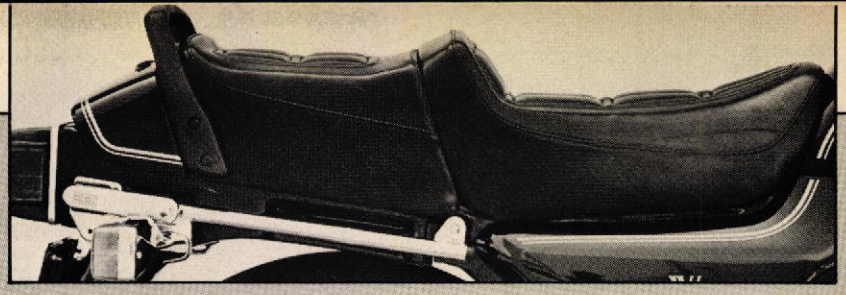
And what mindless purist can object to radar detectors? Once you lash a Gypsy Scout to your handlebar, you can commence booming and zooming right away. You're not forced to endure the double-nickel for 100 miles just to get to 10 miles of road where you can have fun. A radar detector is mandatory equipment for civilized travel, especially when you consider the enthusiasm of police surveillance and the high cost of insurance.

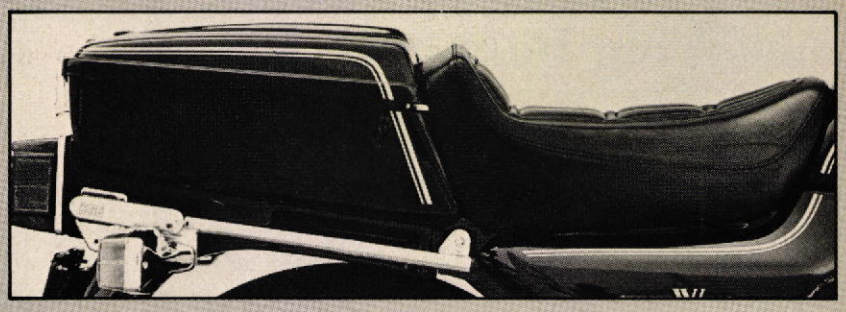
In short, there's nothing wrong with lights and flashes at all. There's no reason to let yourself be distracted by deadly nostalgia for the days of iron men and iron bikes. These are modern times, and civilized transportation is called for. So the electrification of the motorcycle is all right with me. —*Michael Jordan*

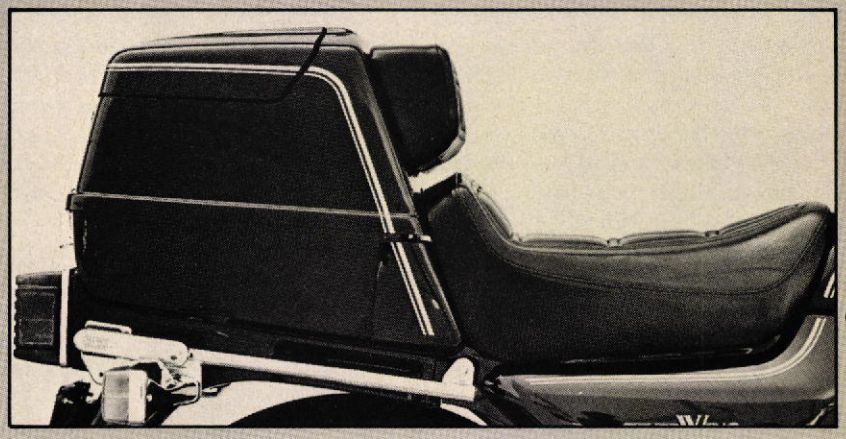


ment. The mounting system *is* solid, and considering the number of functions it performs, should probably be thought of as a marvel of compaction.

You'd do well to use that compaction as a model, at least if you intend to pack for an extended trip on the Silver Wing. The saddlebags, while using an effective, O-ring seal in the tongue-and-groove closure to keep out moisture and road grime, are short on space. They didn't have to be. The bags are positioned an inch or so away from the bike, and that air space would have been better used to make each saddlebag somewhat deeper—or to indulge in a little more mass centralization. The top case, too, is smaller than it might have been, and the unhandy two-top design—apparently constructed around the con-







PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 VIC HUBER

• Homogenized. Let's all get homogenized. We're never too cold, nor too hot, nor too windblown. We all travel from one identical environment to another—from office to car to home in stereo-conditioned comfort.

But please don't homogenize my motorcycle. What the hell is riding a bike supposed to be? Should it feel the same as lounging in the breezeway sipping a beer? Then why not stay at home? Is it supposed to be as comfy and protective as driving a car? Then four-wheel it. But maybe, just maybe, riding a motorcycle should be *different*.

As far as I'm concerned, riding a motorcycle should remain as distinct an experience as possible in the midst of this homogenized existence. Motorcycling should be kept as elemental as possible, because just the sensation of movement and feeling of oneness with my surroundings are sufficient enjoyment. Even the risk of getting cold and wet just spices the experience. It's one of the few times that I conform to my surroundings rather than subdue them.

For me, the ultimate disruption of this adventure is a blaring radio (and blare it must) full of nasal DJs and frantic programming. A radio is too much. My mind is already full with the sensations bombarding me as I ride. And then there's the problem with distraction from proper piloting of the bike. Fiddle with the knobs while cruising the double nickel, and you fiddle with fate, but thankfully the radio is a hazard I can willingly avoid.

Solitude, too, is another virtue of motorcycling. I don't want invisible waves to plug me into every jabberjawing CBer within range. Throw out the 40 channels along with the AM/FM. I just want to hear the hum of a well-tuned engine and be alone with my motorcycle. Purity. That's the message. —*Riley Tharp*

Modular Motorcycling

• A multi-purpose motorcycle is an unexpected development in an age devoted to highly specialized bikes. Yet Honda reckons that after you've had your first or second fling with a bike, you're ready for more than an occasional ride. You want a bike that isn't restricted to around-town errands, or Sunday rides or summer vacations. To provide this flexibility, Honda has built three different modules to be plugged into the back of the Silver Wing according to your whim—a passenger seat, a travel trunk and a touring trunk.

In keeping with Honda tradition, the buddy seat is short and thin. It's a cut above sitting on the rear fender, but most adults will probably pass on it (considering the amount of power available from the GL's engine, they'll be glad they did). Even so, they'll probably keep the seat around.

The small travel trunk is far more functional than the passenger seat. It also looks better. It's not as big inside as its 16½" x 14" x 9" dimensions suggest, though. The trunk is wrapped around the rear fender, so the interior is oddly shaped. Actually, the trunk is about the size of a tankbag and offers the same kind of utility—it's incredibly handy right up to the moment you have to pack a loaf of bread or something.

At the top of the modular list is the Interstate's touring trunk. It adds height to the travel trunk, thanks to a six-inch-tall piece inserted between lid and base. The touring trunk also has a small pad attached to the lid which functions as a backrest. The trunk holds a fairly enormous amount of stuff, but getting at it is a little awkward. Every time you lift the lid high enough for good access, the middle section lifts off the trunk base and your stuff spills on the ground. This accordion effect can be welcome while you're packing the touring trunk, but it's always a hassle while you're unpacking. Honda has fitted the trunk midsection with a wire leash to limit its travel, but the leash doesn't work very well. In the attempt to simplify the touring trunk, Honda apparently has added the complication of dysfunction. We'd gladly trade more mechanical complication for better functional performance.

So that's it, the first modular motorcycle. It has its flaws, but the execution is basically sound and the concept is brilliant. The bottom line is this: Modular motorcycling makes the GL500 a far better bike than it otherwise would be.

—*Michael Jordan*

Continued

TOURING COMPARISON:

Silver Wing Interstate vs. Gold Wing Interstate

Before you choose which way to fly, you've got to spread the 'Wings.

• Any touring bike that's worth its weight in road maps and gas receipts faces one obvious competitor—the Honda Gold Wing. Ask a group of grizzled long-haul riders to name the three top touring rigs, and the Gold Wing Interstate will be high on the list, marque-fanaticism notwithstanding. Most of them will say that the Honda is the king of turn-key tourers, and that sooner or later every touring rig will be measured against the 'Wing.

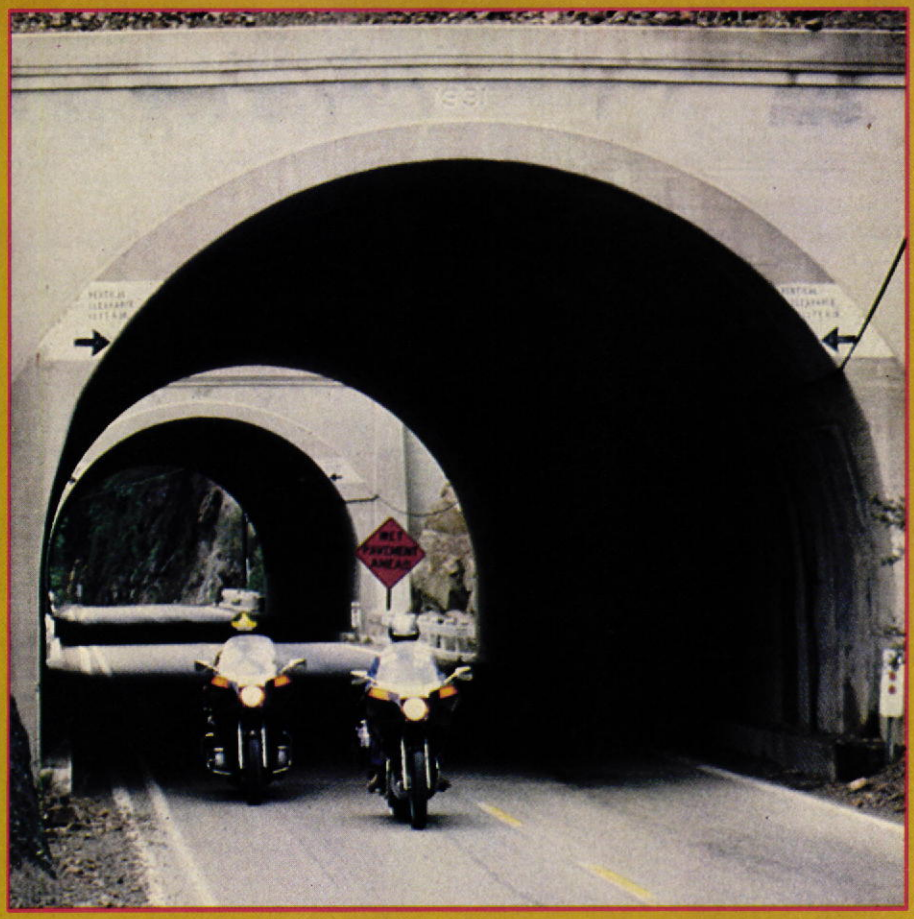
So when Honda introduced its full-dress GL500, the gauntlet was thrown. Maybe that glove didn't fly much farther than across Honda's corporate offices, but the challenge was left to be played out on long stretches of American highway. Forget the displacement difference and that the bikes issue from side-by-side assembly lines; this is open conflict. *Any* water-cooled, shaft-drive tourer, regardless of manufacturer, is an invitation to go wheel-to-wheel with the Gold Wing. But to call the competition the Silver Wing—and the *Interstate* to boot—is to guarantee that the newcomer will be tossed into the ring with the GL1100 at the first opportunity.

From the start, a casual observer would call it an unfair fight. A put-up job sponsored by the Gold Wing Owner's Association as a source of pre-meeting amusement. That observation is easy to defend, since the Silver Wing Interstate is bucking the standard big-bike, big-engine formula for American touring. And the formula clearly shows that with less than half of the GL1100's displacement and a 5.3-inch shorter wheelbase, the GL500 shouldn't be in the same league as the larger 'Wing. Fair enough, on paper at least. But that same paper also shows that the Silver Wing counters with a 174-pound weight advantage, the kind of difference that pays off when the touring turns twisty and the road surface is less than billiard-table smooth.

That difference extends to carrying capacity as well. The Gold Wing weighs in at 691 pounds, chewing up much of its gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) with its own bulk and leaving a recommended carrying limit of 414 pounds. The Silver Wing, despite being obviously downsize next to the Gold Wing, is strictly in the GL1100's class in load capacity. With a dry weight of 517 pounds and a GVWR of 920 pounds, the smaller 'Wing is rated to carry only 11 pounds less than the 1100, leaving open the question of whether or not the GL500's engine is up to the task.

Where to store that load has always

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 RICH COX



been the Gold Wing's long suit. It's the Silver Wing's, too. The touring gear that Honda offers for either Interstate is on a par with the best offered anywhere. The fairing and fairing-mounted options are essentially the same and offer neither bike an advantage, but the saddlebags and travel trunk on the Gold Wing tip the kitchen-sink scale in its favor. Even the larger of the two trunks that fit the Silver Wing doesn't come close to the capacity of the Gold Wing's box. Neither can the GL500's saddlebags match the luggage space of the Gold Wing's panniers, but the Silver Wing's bags trade off size for a quick-detach feature not found on the Gold Wing. In short, if you pack heavy or you're packing for a long trip, the Gold Wing gives you room to spare—or room enough to pack for two. The Silver Wing will accommodate a passenger, but only with the rear seat segment latched in place of the travel trunk, leaving you short on space if you're packing for two. For a single rider, though, the Silver Wing's three cases offer enough room if you pack light.

Once your kit is stowed and you're underway, you notice that both 'Wings' low-speed handling gives little hint to their weight. You'll have to slip the clutch and rev the Silver Wing hard to get it to move through traffic, while the Gold Wing always seems to have enough torque on hand to move out quickly without needing you to play throttle jock.

The Silver Wing also needs a big fist of throttle to get up to freeway speed—or to hold it. You'll see 5340 rpm on the GL500's tachometer when it hits 60 mph, but you still need a shift, or often two, to provoke a fast pass. And at 60 mph, the Silver Wing is producing a lot of engine noise—noise that comes off of the cylinder heads and reflects straight back from the fairing. Vibration through the handlebar, footpegs and tank is also part of the Silver Wing's freeway repertoire, and while the vibes don't go away, neither do they end up numbing body parts to sleep. At the same 60 mph, though, the Gold Wing is turning a mere 3700 rpm, the ride regal and everything as vibration-free as if you hadn't started the engine yet. A blanket of white noise wafts up from the exhaust pipes, but there's no real sensation that an engine is producing the decibels. Mile markers pass while you ride the Gold Wing, with little or no effort required. No shifting, no throttle adjustments, just movement. The Silver Wing takes a little more concentration, a bit more manipulation to keep up.

Off the Superslab, on roads that show up only as thin, blue lines on the road map, the Silver Wing finally begins to pull away—but not by much. Excellent brakes and 174 pounds less motorcycle to sling around let the GL500 pull ahead on slow hard corners, but the Gold Wing reels it back in on every short straight or fast curve, anywhere the Gold Wing's engine can be brought into play. Only the bigger bike's abject lack of ground clearance keeps it behind the GL500, and the Silver Wing must be run up and down the gearbox and pushed hard to stay ahead.

In the end, it's the Silver Wing's constant need to be wrung out that keeps the turn-key touring title firmly in the Gold Wing's corner. The Silver Wing is a competent tourer and a daring effort on Honda's part, and it proves the advantages of small-displacement, solo tourers—including in this case a $1300 price break and an overall 5.9 more miles squeezed from each gallon of fuel throughout the test. But despite having more agility on the backroads, the GL500's engine limits it. The Silver Wing handles the touring tasks you throw its way, but without the easy grace of the GL1100. The Silver Wing is middleweight touring's foothold, but the Gold Wing is still king of the road. —*Larry Works*

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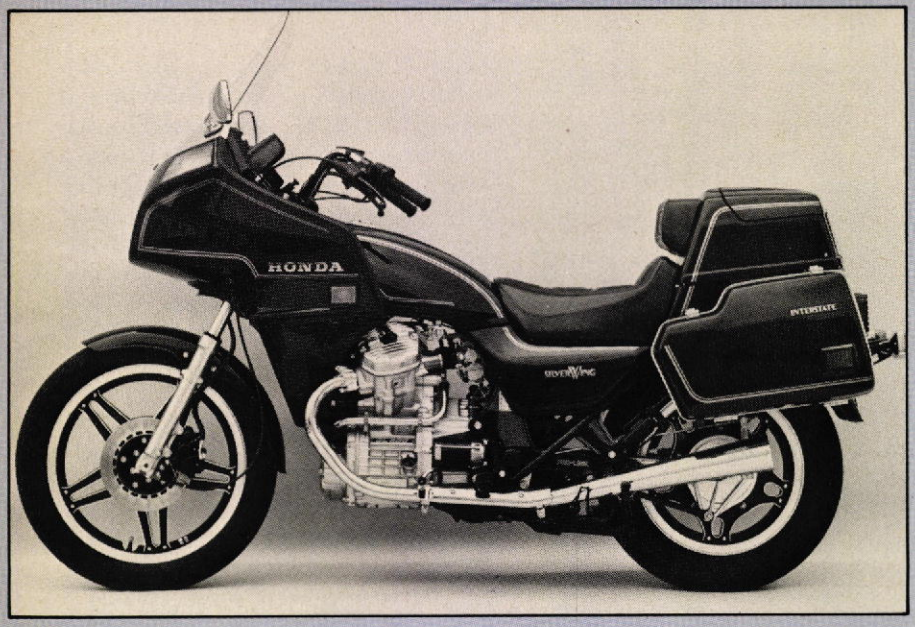
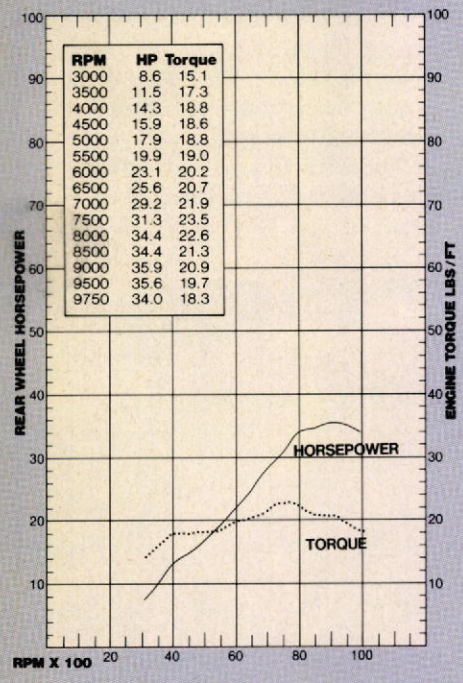
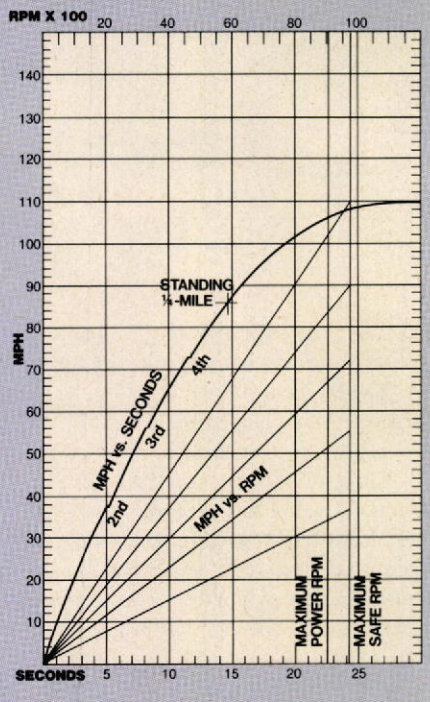
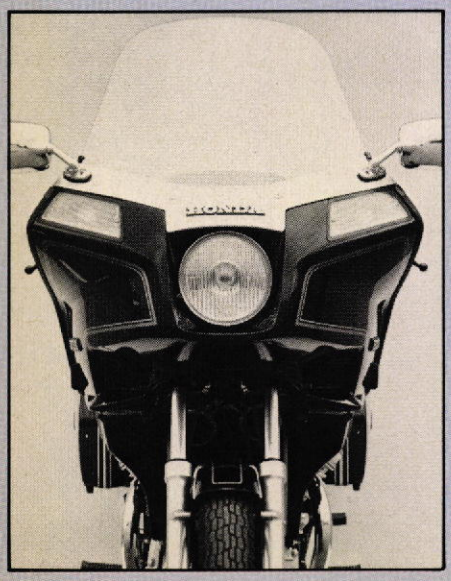
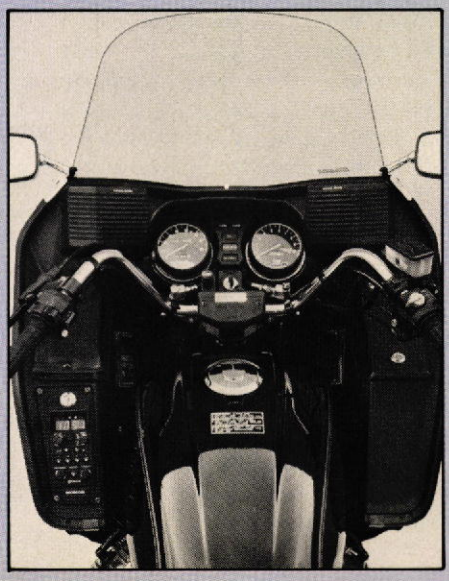


Honda GL500 Interstate









IMPORTER: American Honda Motor Company
100 West Alondra Boulevard
Gardena, California 90247

CATEGORY: touring

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $3998

ENGINE

Type ..... liquid-cooled four-stroke transverse vee-twin
Valve arrangement ..... pushrod-operated overhead valves, four valves per cylinder
Bore and stroke ..... 78.0mm x 52.0mm
Displacement 496.9cc
Compression ratio 10.0:1
Carburetion ..... two 34mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Air filter ..... disposable paper element
Lubrication ..... wet sump
Starting system ..... electric only
Ignition ..... solid-state CDI
Charging system ... 12-volt; alternator, voltage regulator, rectifier

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 2.242:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Driveshaft-to-rear wheel ..... spiral-bevel gears; 3.091:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.733	18.940	3.8
II	1.850	12.821	5.7
III	1.416	9.813	7.4
IV	1.148	7.956	9.2
V	0.931	6.452	11.3

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 35mm stanchion tube diameter / 6.0 in. (152mm)
Rear ..... Pro-Link, air-spring / 5.0 in. (127mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 9.4-in. (240mm) discs
Rear ..... drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front ..... 3.50S19 Bridgestone Mag Mopus L303 tubeless
Rear ... 130/90-16 67S Bridgestone Mag Mopus S714 tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight ..... 517 lbs. (235kg)
Weight distribution ..... 45.6% front, 54.4% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ..... 920 lbs. (417kg)
Wheelbase ..... 58.2 in. (1478mm)
Seat height ..... 31.0 in. (787mm)
Handlebar width ..... 29.5 in. (749mm)
Footpeg height ..... 13.0 in. (330mm)
Ground clearance ..... 7.1 in. (180mm), at exhaust crossover
Steering head angle ..... 28 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.6 in. (117mm)
Frame ..... pressed and tubular mild steel, no front downtubes
Oil capacity ..... 3.2 qt. (3.0/)
Fuel tank ..... steel, 5.0 gal. (19.0/), including 0.8 gal. (3.0/) reserve
Instrumentation ..... speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, coolant temperature gauge

PERFORMANCE

Fuel consumption ..... 39 to 53 mpg (17 to 23 km/l)
Range, maximum ..... 195 to 265 miles (314 to 426km)
Range, reserve only ..... 117 to 159 miles (188 to 256km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated ..... 30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 60 mph indicated ..... 61 mph actual
Best ¼-mile acceleration ... 14.884 sec., 86.37 mph (139 kph)
Top speed (observed) ..... 96 mph (155 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph ..... 33 ft. (10m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph ..... 140 ft. (43m)

WARRANTY: 6 months / 6000 miles

AVAILABLE COLORS: Candy Burgundy or Metallic Black

Honda GL1100 Interstate

IMPORTER: American Honda Motor Company
100 West Alondra Boulevard
Gardena, California 90247

CATEGORY: touring

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $5298

ENGINE

Type ..... water-cooled four-stroke horizontally opposed four
Valve arrangement ..... single overhead camshafts
Bore and stroke ..... 75.0mm x 61.4mm
Displacement 1085.0cc
Compression ratio 9.2:1
Carburetion ..... four 30mm Keihin constant-vacuum, one accelerator pump
Air filter ..... disposable paper element
Lubrication ..... wet sump
Starting system ..... electric only
Ignition ..... transistorized breakerless (with vacuum advance)
Charging system ..... 12-volt; alternator, voltage regulator, rectifier

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... Hy-vo type chain; 1.708:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Transmission-to-driveshaft ..... straight-cut gears; 0.973:1 ratio
Driveshaft-to-rear-wheel ..... spiral bevel gears; 3.091:1 ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.500	12.842	5.9
II	1.667	8.563	8.9
III	1.286	6.606	11.5
IV	1.065	5.471	13.9
V	0.909	4.699	16.3

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 39mm stanchion tube diameter / 6.0 in. (152mm)
Rear ..... air-spring / 3.7 in. (95mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... dual single-action hydraulic calipers, 10.8-in. (275mm) discs
Rear ..... double-action hydraulic caliper, 11.8-in. (300mm) disc

TIRES

Front ..... 110/90-19 62H Dunlop Gold Seal F11 Tubeless
Rear ..... 130/90-17 68H Dunlop Gold Seal K127 Tubeless

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

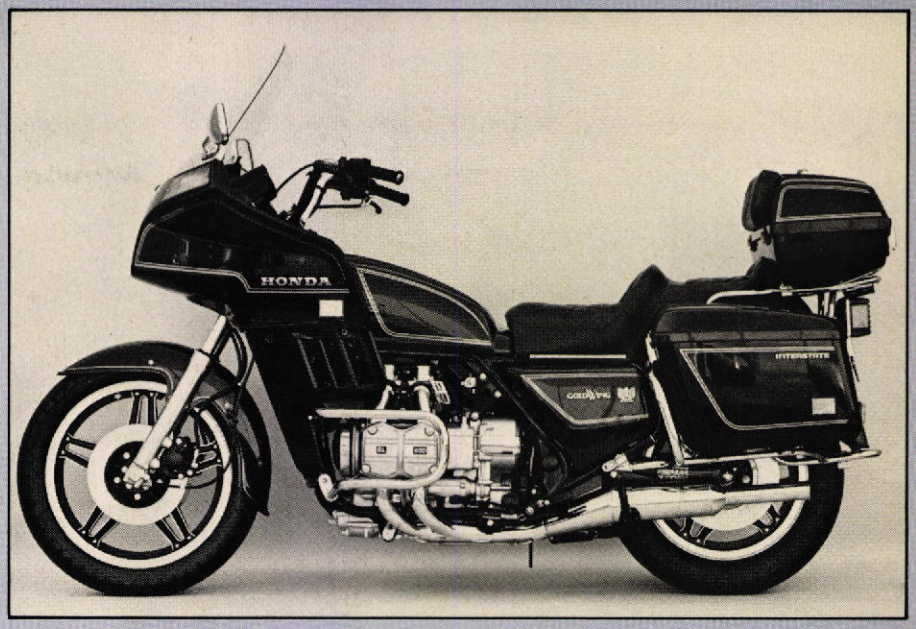
Weight ..... 691 lbs. (313kg)
Weight distribution ..... 44.1% front, 55.9% rear
Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) ..... 1125 lbs. (510kg)
Wheelbase ..... 63.8 in. (1620mm)
Seat height ..... 31.4 in. (798mm)
Handlebar width ..... 31.3 in. (795mm)
Footpeg height ..... 11.2 in. (285mm)
Ground clearance ..... 5.8 in. (148mm), at exhaust pipe
Steering head angle ..... 29.8 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 5.3 in. (134mm)
Frame ..... Tubular mild steel, double front downtubes
Oil capacity ..... 4.2 qt. (4.0l)
Fuel tank ..... steel, 5.4 gal. (20.3l), including 1.4 gal. (5.3l) reserve
Instrumentation ..... speedometer, odometer, tripmeter resettable to zero, tachometer, fuel gauge, water temperature gauge, ambient temperature gauge, altimeter, quartz clock, voltmeter

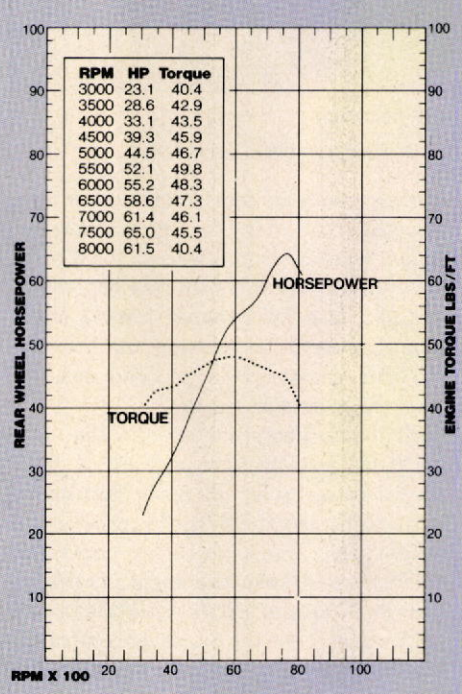
PERFORMANCE

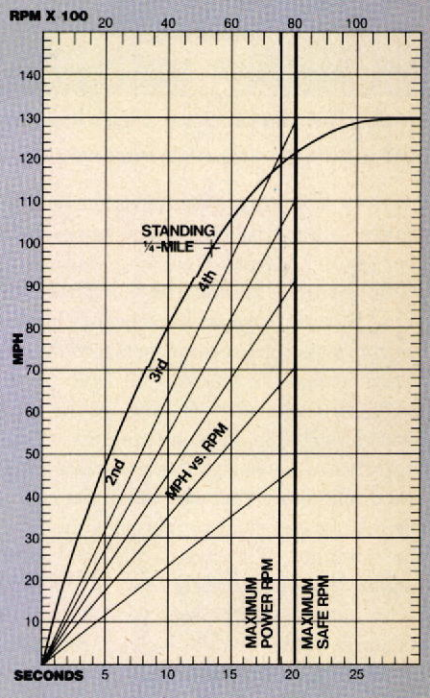
Fuel consumption ..... 39 to 44 mpg (17 to 19 km/l)
Range, maximum ..... 211 to 238 miles (339 to 383km)
Range, reserve only ..... 55 to 62 miles (88 to 100km)
Speedometer error, 30 mph indicated ..... 30 mph actual
Speedometer error, 60 mph indicated ..... 63 mph actual
Best ¼-mile acceleration ... 13.370 sec., 99.66 mph (160 kph)
Top speed (calculated) ..... 130 mph (210 kph)
Stopping distance from 30 mph ..... 37 ft. (11m)
Stopping distance from 60 mph ..... 148 ft. (45m)

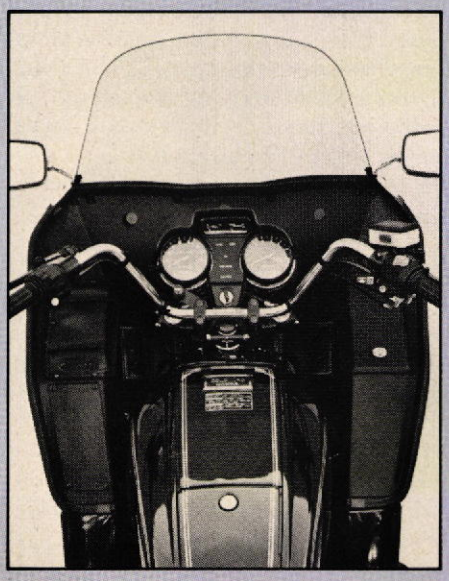
WARRANTY: 6 months/6000 miles

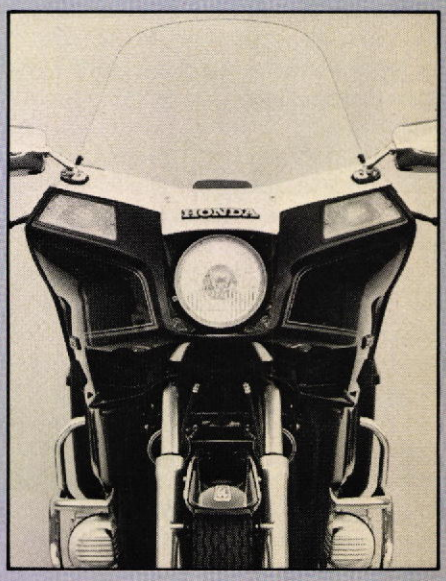
AVAILABLE COLORS: Candy Burgundy or Metallic blue Black











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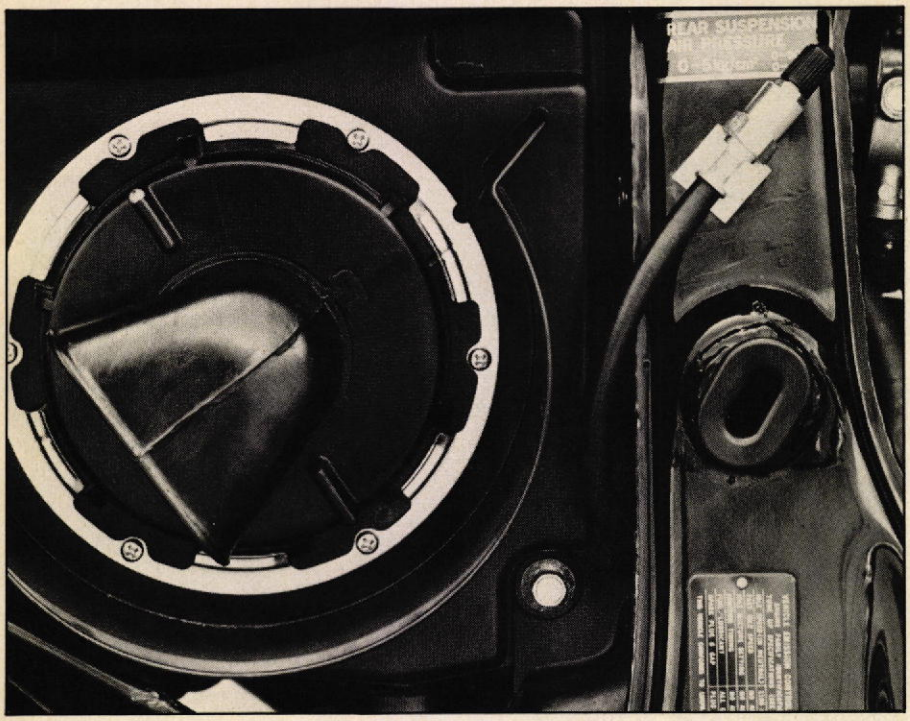


Flexible filler charges Silver Wing's Pro-Link in 0-70-psi range

And a high-pressure blast raises the GL's elevator seat by more than an inch.

tingency of holding a full-coverage helmet, makes unpacking the case a chore. The gear overall is solid, tight and well-made, but it raises the question of what the Silver Wing Interstate might have been if Honda hadn't used the modular seat/trunk as a hedge on the solo touring question.

Chances are, such a bike would have been remarkable, because the Silver Wing as it sits is close to the mark. Provided that you don't get carried away with the size of the fairing and start to picture yourself at the controls of a cross-country heavyweight, the GL500 offers most of the right combinations for the long haul. If you *do* succumb to the Silver Wing's simulation of bigness, though, you'll endure the rude awakening that you're not on a 1000cc-plus stratocruiser. It comes in the form of one or two shifts needed for a burst of acceleration from freeway speed. Or from the double handful of throttle needed to get even with the traffic flow. Or from the inevitable vibration and drone of a 500cc twin turning 5370 rpm—the engine speed required for 60-mph cruising.

But if you allow from the beginning that the Silver Wing is a *different* kind of tourer, one that offers its own brand of benefits, it is far easier to enjoy. Despite being slightly underdamped both front and rear, the Silver Wing does a cushy, studied approximation of big-bike ride, gliding over the small stuff and turning big bumps into little ones. Even the well-shaped but too-hard seat benefits from the GL500's plush, progressive suspension, becoming merely an item of note, rather than something to suffer. The fairing offers excellent protection and, except for a wind blast that strikes at boot-top height, you're wrapped in a full-coverage touring envelope that straddles the fine line between too little weather protection and isolation from the motorcycle itself.

That fine line stretches into the GL's backroad performance as well. A 517-pound motorcycle will never feel like a lightweight, but the Silver Wing wears its weight well. You have to tap-dance the gearshift and keep the engine cranking near its 9750-rpm redline to extract much performance, but the GL never complains. The suspension feels soft, even when the air pressure is at the maximum, but the Silver Wing maintains an ineffable air of tire adhesion, up through the point where the centerstand legs make contact with the pavement. You *can* extract wallow if you simply override the bike, but after all, full-on backroad honking has got to be low on the GL's list of design objectives.

No, the Silver Wing has a higher purpose. It's for hitting the high road solo. For reaffirming the intimate bond between rider and bike. As a concept, it's nothing short of brilliant. With a little more engine, the execution could be brilliant as well. But despite any shortcomings in the Interstate, it still has a powerful attraction. And you have to love a motorcycle that provides its own background music, turning any ride into a travelogue at the touch of a button. •

Ride Review

• There's not much chance I could be snookered into Interstate travel on the Silver Wing. About 5500 rpm at 60 mph is more vee-twin than I can stand. And the seat is too hard. Where long distance is concerned, the Gold Wing makes the Silver Wing seem made of baser mettle.

But my preference really isn't for Interstate travel. The thinner and more crooked the line on the road map, the better. And instead of restricting me to sightseeing on back roads, the Silver Wing Interstate encourages conventional two-wheel fun. I can ride as fast as I dare, and still carry enough luggage to pack dinner clothes for the best country inns.

I guess the Silver Wing's appeal for me is the way it brings touring and motorcycling together. Sure, you won't see me at Sturgis or Aspencade, but every back road within miles will carry the imprint of the Silver Wing's tires. —*Michael Jordan*

• Middleweight touring is a great idea, but the Silver Wing Interstate just doesn't fit my definition. Hanging full-size accessories on a 500cc bike produces an imbalance in function that spoils the GL for me. The engine must grind along at 5500 rpm at 60 mph just to have sufficient passing power, and the result is a nerve-racking ride full of noise and vibration. With its 517-pound dry weight, the chassis seems overworked—its Pro-Link feels underdamped and the fork exhibits an amazing amount of flex.

As far as I'm concerned, middleweight touring means less weight, less complexity, and, hopefully, less money. At nearly $4000, the baby Interstate is a good idea carried way beyond propriety, and the result is either an underpowered heavyweight or an overweight middleweight.

—*Riley Tharp*

• I can't understand Honda. How can a firm that produces a motorcycle as brilliant as the Gold Wing come up with the GL500 Interstate? I admit it sounds like a good idea with its downsize dimensions and lighter weight, but somewhere between committee room and sales floor something went wrong. It's not that the Silver Wing is that bad, but it has so few redeeming features I can't see why anyone would prefer it to a Gold Wing.

I'll admit that reduced weight is an advantage, but it seems to have come at the expense of everything else. The 500cc motor barely has enough steam to pull one person, let alone two with luggage. And if you want to cruise at 55 mph you must contend with vibration and engine noise amplified by the fairing. Not me. I won't put up with any inconvenience—I'll just buy a Gold Wing. —*David Dewhurst*

MINITEST:

Honda GL500 Silver Wing

Adult-rated for multi-purpose adventures.

• When they made the CX500, they broke the mold. Lucky for us. All the right elements for a remarkable bike are on hand in the CX—relatively light weight, shaft drive and a 500cc vee-twin engine with the right vibes—but the end product doesn't exactly stir the soul. The styling gives new meaning to the word "funky." The engine looks like an ersatz generator, an escapee from Honda's Power Products division.

That's why the first sight of the GL500 inspires an audible sigh of relief. The GL designation tells you the Silver Wing is of the touring persuasion, but it also tells you the CX concept has matured at last. The Silver Wing is an adult's motorcycle, not just another middleweight hot rod.

The GL's secret is its ability to adapt to all the things you like to do with bikes. When you bring it home from the motorcycle store, the GL probably will be wearing its standard two-passenger seat, and it will look like the sort of sensible bike that can be rationalized on the household budget as a device for to-ing and fro-ing. Once you get it home, however, you'll probably detach the buddy seat and pitch it into a dark corner of your garage. Then you'll fit the optional-at-no-cost small touring trunk, transforming the GL into that most provocative of devices, the one-man motorcycle. Even though the trunk won't hold much more than a brown-bag lunch without folding, spindling and mutilating it, it makes the GL ideal for commuting or day-tripping. And if you want to take an overnight jaunt, you can buy the Interstate touring trunk. These three accessories give the GL500 a multi-purpose identity that transcends the 500cc displacement barrier. This isn't just another inexpensive substitute for a real touring bike, it's the first modular motorcycle, a device that inspires two-wheel fantasies instead of limiting them.

Fortunately, the GL500 has the hardware to fulfill this sophisticated mission. The rear Pro-Link suspension provides the cushiness expected from a big bike. The new air-spring fork swallows road imperfections whole by virtue of its triple-rate springs, light damping and dual anti-friction bushings. The Silver Wing actually does a remarkable job of duplicating the stability and equilibrium of a big bike. Substantial geometry changes play a large role in this feat, for the steering head angle has increased 1.5 degrees, while 1.6 inches have been added to the wheelbase thanks to a 10mm increase in trail and the 30mm-longer swingarm required by Pro-Link.

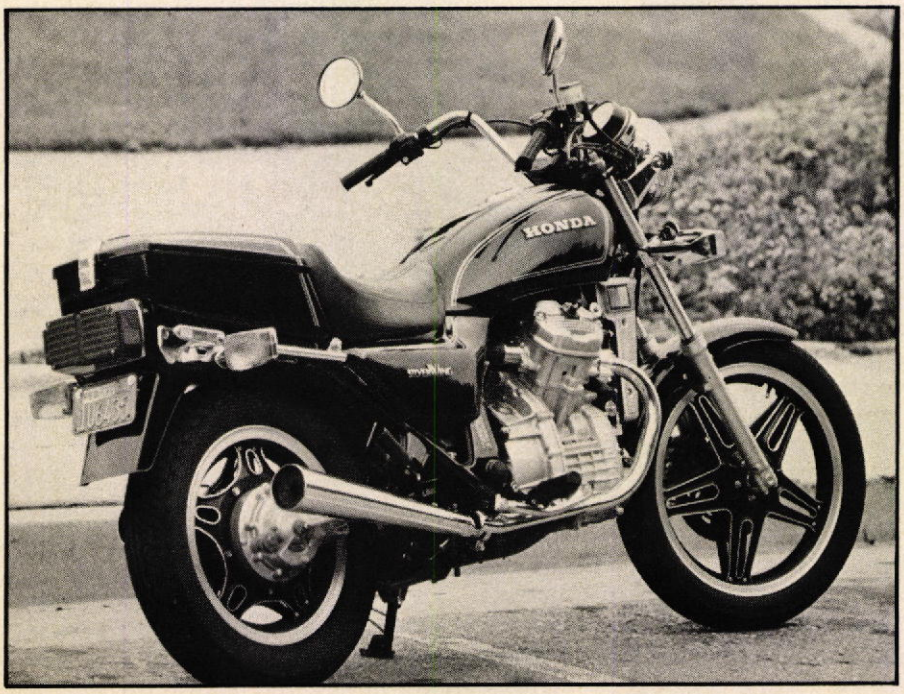
The riding position is just as fullsize as the ride motions. Honda has moved the engine 30mm forward and slightly down, and tucked in the carbs (both, perhaps, related to the requirements of the forthcoming CX Turbo). These changes plus the longer wheelbase move your knees out of bruising distance of the cylinder heads. Meanwhile, the seat is long and flat, and the footpegs have been lowered 20mm to match the 22mm-lower seat height. The end result is a first-class touring cabin. Indeed, the Silver Wing carries all the accouterments of a posh touring bike, from the handlebar, to the halogen headlight, to the powerful generator, to the accessory electrical terminal.

Unlike a Gold Wing, however, the Silver Wing can be ridden in the performance mode. First of all, the bike does not suffer from shaft-drive gymnastics. Then the fork's air-assist keeps the front end from bottoming when the powerful twin-piston caliper clamps the single front disc. The GL also makes transitions quickly, despite a longer wheelbase, slower steering geometry and heavier weight than a CX, perhaps because the shock's under-seat location reinforces the benefits of mass centralization designed into the CX. As you peel off for a corner, the rear end almost feels as if it pushes the bike around rather than being steered by the front tire. However, the Silver Wing is still very stable and grips the road well.

Ironically, the Silver Wing's greatest flaw is also its greatest selling point—its engine. In order to deliver adequate roll-on thrust, the motor is geared to produce 5500 rpm at 60 mph, which in turn makes the handlebar vibrate like some curious sexual appliance. Such vibration in a touring bike is utterly unacceptable, no matter what Honda says about the exigencies of extracting sufficient power from a 500cc vee-twin. Since the GL doesn't deliver much roll-on power anyway, gearing more suitable for the Interstate instead of the dragstrip clearly is in order.

Even with this handicap, though, the Silver Wing still stands out among middleweight bikes. It downsizes the attributes of a full-size bike without downsizing the comfort quotient. Maybe the displacement has changed in the translation of Gold Wing into Silver Wing, but the adventure potential has not.

—Michael Jordan



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HONDA GL500 SILVER WING

Importer: American Honda Motor Company
100 West Alondra Boulevard
Gardena, California 90247

Category:	touring
Suggested retail price:	$2898
Engine type	water-cooled four-stroke transverse vee-twin
Valve arrangement	pushrod-operated overhead valves
Bore and stroke	78.0mm x 52.0mm
Displacement	496.9cc
Compression ratio	10.0:1
Carburetion	two 34mm Keihin constant-vacuum
Gearbox	5 speed
Front fork / wheel travel	35mm stanchion tube diameter 6.0 in. (152mm)
Rear shocks / wheel travel	Pro-Link, air-spring 5.0 in. (127mm)
Wheelbase	58.2 in. (1478mm)
Seat height	31.0 in. (787mm)
Weight	464 lbs. (210kg)
Best ¼-mile acceleration	14.419 sec., 91.00 mph (146 kph)
Top speed (calculated)	110 mph (177 kph)
Warranty	6 months / 6000 miles
Available colors	Candy Burgundy or Metallic Black

The Battle Of The Twins

Up-again, down-again, in search of a sanction.

BY ALAN CATHCART AND JEFF BURTT

PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 TOM RILES

The noise is superb. The offbeat thunder of Harley and Ducati vee-twins contrasts sharply with the rasp of parallel-twin Nortons and Triumphs, the huff-huff of a Moto Guzzi and the unmistakable sound of a low-flying buzz bomb that is a BMW at full tilt. Even a Vincent burbling by, with an XS-and-ex-Kenny Roberts dirttrack-motor Yamaha screaming in its wake, is deliciously satisfying. It is nostalgia unleashed. It is entertainment, pure and simple–the Battle of the Twins.

"You know, it's funny," says Dwaine Williams of Lakeland, Florida, "you'd think the timing was all wrong to run what amounts to an *antique* Twins race at an AMA National. These bikes aren't for the *kids*, they're for us *old* farts. But you know what? We're getting it rolling—people are coming to *watch*."

His partner, Jess O'Brien of St. Petersburg, steps in. "We wanted to bring some spectator interest back into racing that we thought was missing," he says. "That's why this series exists."

Williams and O'Brien are two-thirds of a Florida triumvirate that is reveling over the successful early fruit of their two-year-long struggle to initiate, organize, classify and bring to the roadracing public the Battle of the Twins. Williams is BOT President and Treasurer. O'Brien, brother of Harley-Davidson team manager Dick O'Brien, is the Competition director. And Jim France, son of Daytona International Speedway owner Bill France, is, according to Williams, "the reason we started this damn thing in the first place." In fairness to France, Daytona was the venue for the first trial Battle of the Twins race in October of 1980, and the site of the 11-race series kickoff during Cycle Week '81 last March. It will also host the series finale at Cycle Week '82.

There is ample evidence that the twin-cylinder motorcycle exercises powerful emotions in the hearts of the American racing public. From boardtrack to banking, dirttrack to asphalt, an American racer has been epitomized by a lusty, thunderous vee-twin clad in an evil, skimpy frame that somehow looked to be doing the Ton just standing still.

That's what real motorcycle racing was all about; only on dirttracks, however, is it still. But back in the Sixties, when other manufacturers came to play in Harley-Davidson's back yard they brought their Twins along for toys. Triumph, BMW and Norton to start with, then the Italian mob and, latterly, the Japanese. Most survived the decade, some more successfully than others, but when BSA/Triumph introduced its Triples, and Bugsy Mann won the Daytona 200 on a Honda Four in 1970, the era of the Open-class roadracing Twin was, effectively, over.

Still, the manufacturers, mostly European, continued to craft twin-cylinder road bikes throughout the Seventies; some of them fine performers. Fine enough, in fact, to join the cammy, wobbly Japanese inline Fours in a newly-created AMA professional racing class called Superbike. *Real* motorcycles like the California Hot

Rod Ducati of Cook Neilson, the Mike Baldwin/Reno Leoni Moto Guzzi, and the Udo Geitel-tuned Butler & Smith BMWs ridden by Reggie Pridmore and Steve McLaughlin once more carved a place for themselves on the start grids of roadrace tracks across America.

Good things came to an end again, however. Toward the close of the decade, slowly but surely the Japanese Fours stopped needing both sides of the track *and* the grass verge to proceed down the straightaway, and once they had accomplished that the Twins were out of business. It wasn't so much a case of inferiority, though. The makers of Twins just realized that they had neither the cubic money nor the competitive inclination to match the pace of Oriental development. So, except for the odd indecently fast Ducati upon which tender loving care had been lavished to an inordinate degree, exit the Twins, stage left.

And enter Williams, O'Brien and France who, in 1979, sensed a rekindling of enthusiasm—or, if you will, a reawakening of an almost-inherent memory—for the Twins.

"Back in '79, Jim France came up with an all-Harley-class idea that we kinda went to work on," says Williams. "You see, during Cycle Week Jim draws maybe 10,000 Harley riders—maybe a little more—to the races, but there's *80,000* of 'em downtown on Main Street getting *drunk* all week. Jim figured the only way to get the Harley crowd was to run a Harley race—of course, he's right there—but hell, there's just no way you could write the rules and set up classes and find enough riders to make it fair or interesting enough for everybody, and the whole thing just fell through." The group, undaunted, rethought the matter over the Winter, came up with what they reckoned was a realistic three-class formula and got it together for an October 1980 date at Daytona.

It was an AMA Pro-Am, and the last race of the season for the National Superbike class. Their championship was at stake, a title that would later be clouded by protests and counter-protests between Yoshimura's Wes Cooley and Kawasaki's Eddie Lawson. Cooley won the race—and, eventually, the championship—but nerves were keen and faces intent that early Fall.

In the Twins race, a relaxed affair, 26 riders gridded, four more than in the Superbike main event. Jimmy Adamo won the inaugural ("Experimental," says Williams) on an immaculate Ducati 850 owned by Reno Leoni of Berliner Motors Corp. of America. The blueprinted 864cc motor yielded a claimed 95 horsepower at 8500 rpm. Adamo, coming off Daytona's 31-degree banking, was speed-trapped at 157 mph down the back chute, a tolerable accomplishment for a mid-Seventies Superbike. Even better, from a good-neighbor standpoint, none of the Twins was detected capriciously bespotting Daytona's asphalt; the racing was clean in more ways than one. The Florida trio's first hurdle was over.

"Everybody was pleased after the October race," says Williams, "and we thought we'd have a good one in March of '81. Oh, we changed the rules a little bit for the riders from what we learned, but nothing major. I called Mike DiPrete (AMA Commissioner of Professional Competition) before the 1981 Rule Book was printed and asked if he wanted to put our rules in. We had six of our 11 races scheduled at AMA events, you know. He said no, we'd better run a year and get all the rules worked out, and then they'd take a look at it in 1982. We were set, or so we thought."

Of such simple assumptions matters of moment are often born, and soon, too terribly soon, three upstanding moto-citizens from Florida were embroiled in a fierce misunderstanding with the AMA, motorcycle racing's ever-suffering whipping boy.

"I've dealt with the AMA for a long time, and they're a pretty ignorant bunch," says Williams, overstating the case a tad. "They don't understand anything. But when they get offered something they can *use*, they want to take it away from everybody and make it their own."

The reason for all this choler stemmed from an innocent January phone call to *Cycle News East;* a query from Williams as to why an ad for the Cycle Week '81 Battle of the Twins race hadn't been printed. He was kindly informed by a member of the staff that, sir, the AMA had scratched BOT from the Daytona program—that's why.

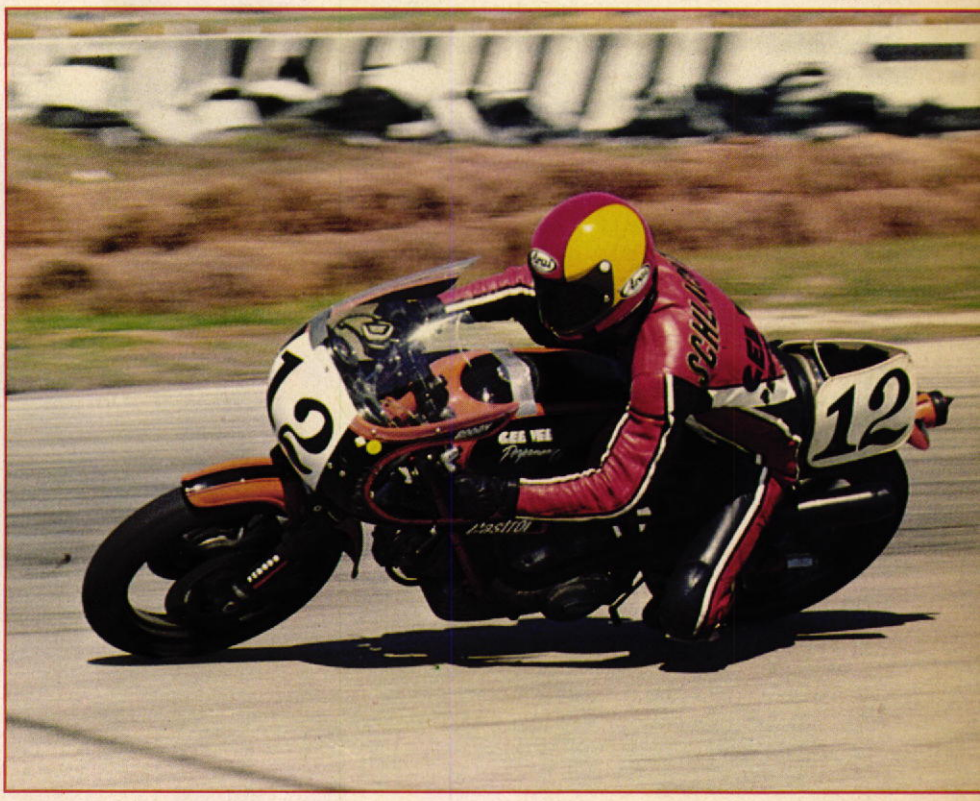
"Can you believe it?" fumes Williams. "We got down to two months before the race and found out DiPrete had scratched our event and didn't even tell us we were scratched! That really screwed things up, so I called him and asked 'What the hell are you doing?' He said, 'It's against our policy to run a meet and have another organization run a race within our meet.' "

Methodology aside, DiPrete had a point. It seemed that Williams was an official in FGPR, Florida Grand Prix Riders association, and that the infant BOT was tantamount to a brainchild of that group.

"Hell," snorts Williams, "we weren't setting up a booth or anything to sell memberships. And besides, I *knew* all *our* riders would be forced to buy AMA cards in order to compete at Daytona." Still, posing an analogous situation—say, Pete Rozelle allowing a soccer exhibition at halftime during the Superbowl—drives the point deeper into BOT's court.

Hurried phone calls to France and O'Brien resulted in a down-home strategy to stave off disaster. It was decided that France, son of the Speedway owner and

Continued



PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 RICH CHENET

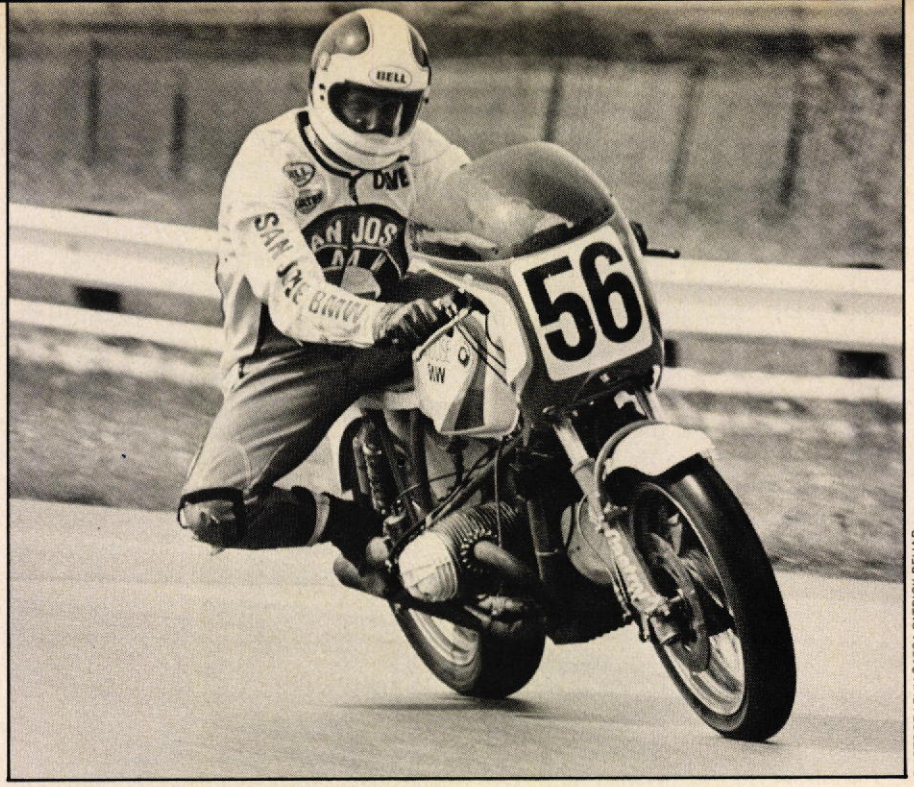
the man with whom AMA would have to deal at Cycle Weeks stretching into the foreseeable future, would call Lin Kuchler, AMA Executive Director, and try to sort things out. In effect, France said that it was *his* idea to run the Twins, and they were going to be run whether AMA liked it or not. A simple, no-nonsense conversation between two reasonable men of good will. It was effective: BOT was reinstated, riders would agree to buy AMA cards, no mention of FGPR was made and the race was set for Friday, March 6—ironically, the same day as the Superbike race.

Of the 88 bikes entered, 65 made the starting grid, and the Battle of the Twins once more outdrew the National Superbike field. Adamo's Ducati was again triumphant, chased home by Rich Schlachter—who inherited his ride when Ted Boody was injured in practice—on another Ducati and Malcolme Tunstall on yet a third. Tunstall's Duck was prepared by his father, expatriate Britisher Syd Tunstall, and boasted exhausts and a fairing copied from the late Mike Hailwood's TT bike, plus numerous other features. All-internal oilways, a twin-plug head, oversize valves and clutch, Imola cams and a 10.8:1 compression ratio were among its exotica. Local racer John Tesauro was fourth on the only fast Guzzi in the race; John Long's ex-Udo Geitel BMW and Dave Roper's Rob Iannucci-owned Harley-Davidson XR750 were fifth and sixth.

The series kickoff, like the inaugural, went without mishap, and the number of marques represented (11) was greater than all four other roadrace classes at Daytona combined. "More riders, more brands," said Williams proudly, making sure it was on the record as he prepared to move operations to Talladega for BOT round number Two the next week. His air of satisfaction would have turned stale had he known that another misstep by his fledgling series, as perceived through the eyes of AMA, would in less than seven days prove troublesome.

In order to provide an 11-race series—only six of which were sanctioned at AMA race dates—the BOT management sought, and received, sanctions from three other roadrace groups, bringing to five (counting FGPR) the different organizations involved. Misunderstanding number two had occurred.

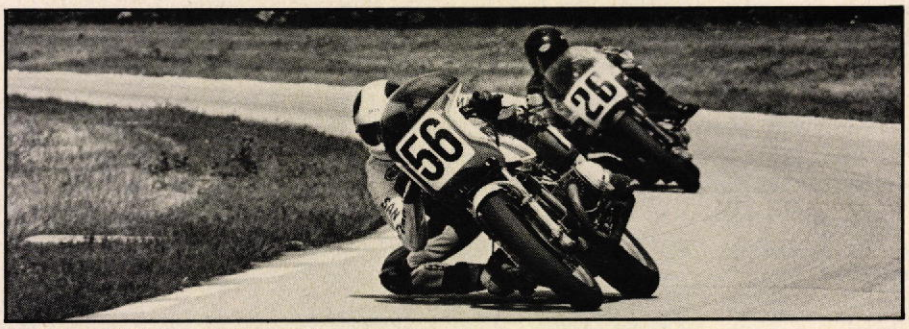
"DiPrete came up to me at Talladega," says Williams, "and said if we didn't run all-AMA he'd pull our sanction. That surprised me, but I told him to go ahead; we ran our races for our riders, not him. He said he didn't give a damn what we did, just that AMA policy didn't allow for participation



PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 PATRICK BEHAR

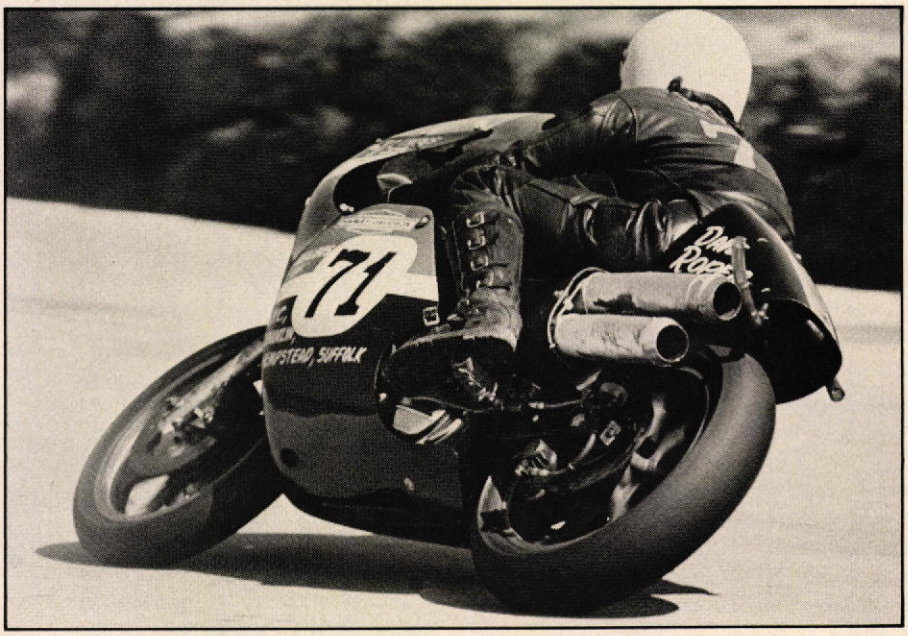
Emde's not stylish, his knee is out all the time

But he sure can spin a Beemer around on one cylinder.



Emde leads Adamo at Elkhart, a lovely country ride

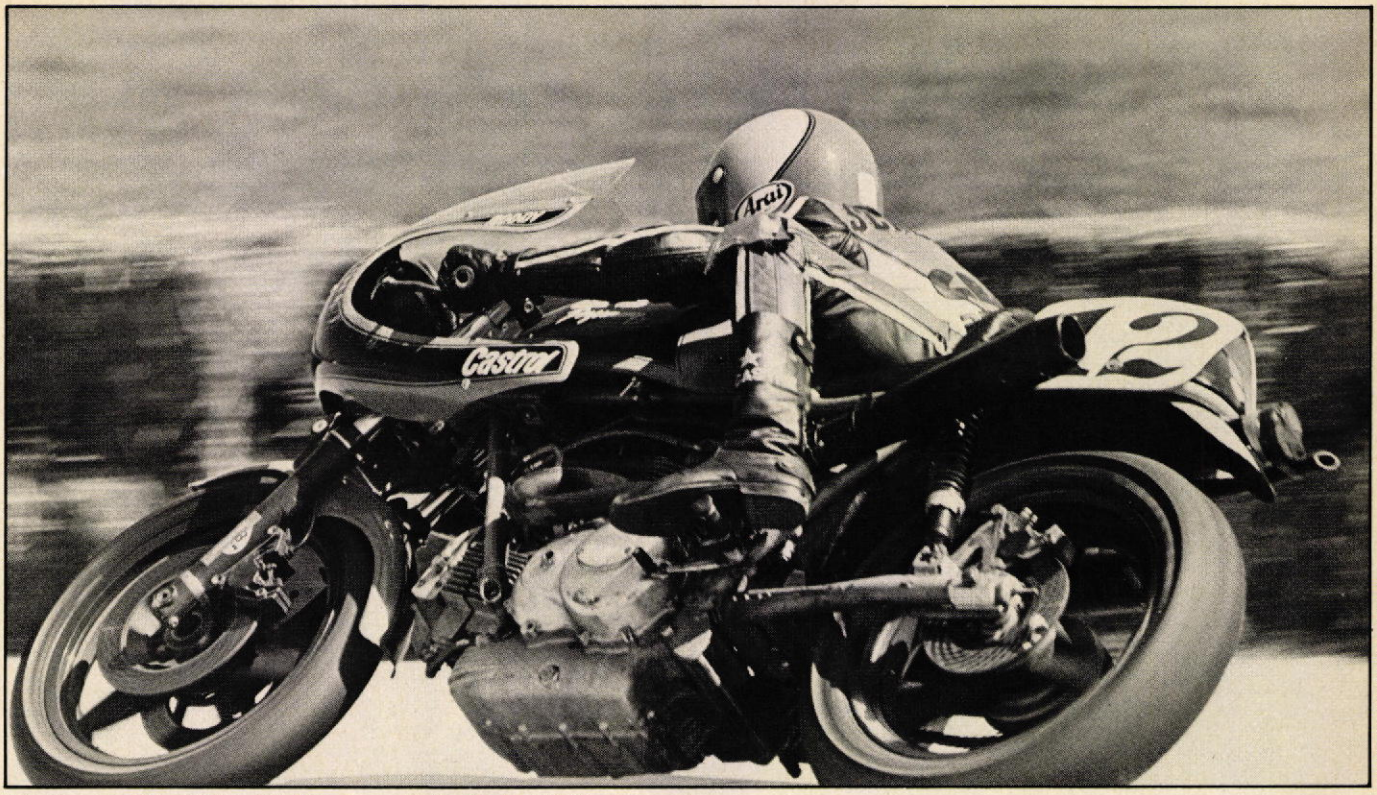
The San Jose BMW was a long, long way from home.



PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 TOM RILES

The Team Obsolete's Harley-Davidson XR750 was anything but

An ex-Scott Brelsford racer, the one-off was sixth with Dave Roper aboard.



PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 TOM RILES

A broken clavicle sidelined Ted Boody, so his buddy Rich Schlachter rode

The Gee-Vee Performance Ducati was second at Daytona.

with competing sanction groups."

For his part, DiPrete says, "My understanding all along was that they (BOT) were maneuvering for an AMA sanction for their entire *series*, and that became the problem. I told him (Williams) at Talladega that we couldn't sanction them for a series if they were involved with other groups. The thing is, if the AMA is expected to be responsible over the whole season, and award a trophy or whatever at the end, we have to have control. How do you control combined sanctions? If a protest is lodged at another race and we weren't there to officiate, how can we be responsible?

"I don't mean to say that we run races better than anybody," DiPrete adds. "The other groups are needed, more than just for the Battle of the Twins—they do a good service to the sport. In fact, we have a good working relationship with them. But if a question comes up at one of their races and it's *our* series, what do you do?"

The point is well taken, though the methodology, again, dismembered tact. Another session of phone calls ensued—including at least one more France/Kuchler get-together—Talladega was reinstated and ran, again, without incident, and the series to date is happily ensconced at various racetracks under differing sanctions and progressing toward its conclusion.

But will it exist next year? And if so, in what form? DiPrete, for one, is optimistic. "I think it'll run," he says, "Interest should grow. And I see nothing wrong with having the existing group continue to run the series. We'll be involved, especially if we get more roadraces like we expect to. I have no problems with competing sanction bodies next year because it's understood that AMA won't be running the series.

"You know," he muses, "I think the reason the series came about is there's no place in the current Pro racing structure for Twins. Maybe when the Superbike rules change for 1983—we're dropping the four-cylinder multis from 1025 to 750cc and allowing 1000cc Twins—the series could fit into that Pro class."

"Foul!" cries Williams, "turn this thing Pro and we'll lose two-thirds of our riders. The class has got to be run for the riders, all 150 or so that we've got signed up. I'd like to see the Twins run by a Twins organization of its own—*all* of the riders want that. We can get along with the sanctioning bodies. We have so far. But I'm not going to be affiliated with some damn dumbbell who can't tell a Harley from a Ducati if it don't have the name on the tank.

"Two years from now will be the key," says Williams, calming. "Then we'll know if people will really come back to see some old Twins run. Then, if the AMA and factories want to get involved I'll say 'Go ahead!' All me and Jess wanted to do was start the series with Jim, get it going and then back off. We've got our own businesses and all, you know. Boy, have we ever learned something from all of this—but we're staying with it."

Indeed, their learning process and sincere desire to do their best by the class they've recreated has led the Florida Three to a kind of vengeful wisdom. When asked why the 1981 series finale is scheduled three months into the new year at Daytona Cycle Week '82, Williams smiles and his voice gets warm.

"Two reasons, really," he begins. "One, it's a long series and we didn't want to run the last race, the most important race, when our rider's bikes were plain wore out. The racing's for them, after all.

"Two, the only way I could keep the AMA from screwing up the series was to schedule the last race for *after* the 1982 Rule Book is printed. It comes out around October or November of '81, and they can't incorporate us into their '82 rules if we're still running the series. Nobody's figured it out yet, but *that's* the way we'll keep control of this thing through next year—it'll all be worked out through us."

American savvy incarnate. Couple that with a dose of nostalgia, entertainment pure and simple—and, oh my yes, that glorious sound—and the Battle of the Twins might just have found the formula for survival. •

Honda put together the first dual purpose motorcycle the magazines couldn't take apart.

Sometimes it seems like the motorcycle magazines have something against dual purpose motorcycles.

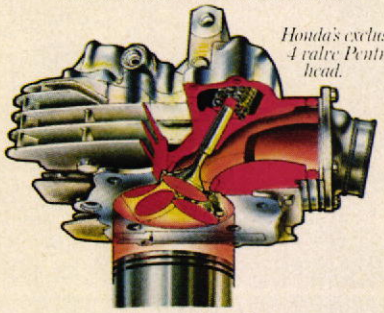
Listen to *Cycle World* for example: "Normally dual purpose machines are compromises between dirt and street designs... the result is a motorcycle that doesn't do anything well."

So it's no surprise that when the motorcycle press got ahold of last year's Honda XL500S, they gave it the most grueling test rides imaginable.

Then they told the world exactly what they thought of it.

The XL500S is the best dual purpose motorcycle you can buy.

The results were unanimous.



Honda's exclusive 4 valve Pentroof™ head.

Straight from the horse's mouth.

Cycle, the most popular magazine on two wheels, began with an august statement. "The big Honda thumper is unequivocally the best dual-purpose bike available today."

Cycle World named it one of the Year's Ten Best Motorcycles, but didn't stop there. "... it's more than just the best dual purpose bike, it's also one of the best small street bikes available.", they said.

Cycle Guide was just as complimentary. "It's the Cadillac of the class."

Motorcyclist named it "The Best Buy for 1980" out of a competitive field that wasn't merely dual purpose machines, but every motorcycle offered for sale in 1980.

And *Dirt Bike,* a magazine well-known for its thrash-it-within-an-inch-of-its-life riding style, simply said "Without a doubt, the Honda XL500S is the best big, four-stroke dual-purpose motorcycle built today."

There's only one problem with these great reviews. They're for the 1980 XL500S.

What are the magazines going to do this year?

Because this year's XL500S is even better than last year's.

Thumper and lightning.

The heart of the XL500S is what riders and reviewers affectionately call a thumper.

A big, single cylinder four-stroke with gobs of power and mountains of torque. Honda has taken the basic idea and refined it into one of the most comfortable and versatile powerplants on earth. Or off.

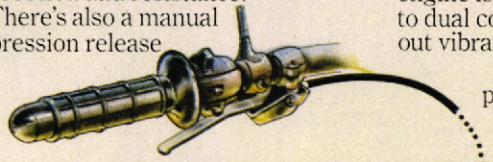
Honda's technologically advanced Pentroof™ combustion chamber uses four valves instead of the more conventional two.

And delivers better breathing at high rpm's without valve float.

By using two exhaust ports, the exhaust pipes can be tucked in closer to the frame while still improving exhaust flow efficiency.

To make it easier to start than an ordinary dual purpose machine, the XL500S employs an automatic compression release. As you kick down on the starter, the exhaust valves open slightly to reduce engine compression and resistance.

There's also a manual compression release



mounted on the handlebars for bump starting on downhills.

And to make it easier to maintain, the XL500S uses a high performance capacitor discharge ignition. No points. No maintenance. Ever.

The dirty truth.

The XL500S heads for the hills with all the equipment you need for Mother Nature.

Like suspension that would look at home on an enduro course. Leading axle forks with 8 inches of travel. Gas-charged lay-down shocks with 7 inches of travel. Both with new and improved damping rates for 1981.

The swing arm has been improved, too. This year, it's a box section design that pivots on needle bearings.

Even the small touches are there. Like the enduro style chain guide and chain adjusters. The USDA-approved spark arrestor. Or the new extra wide front fender. Everything you need to leave civilization behind.

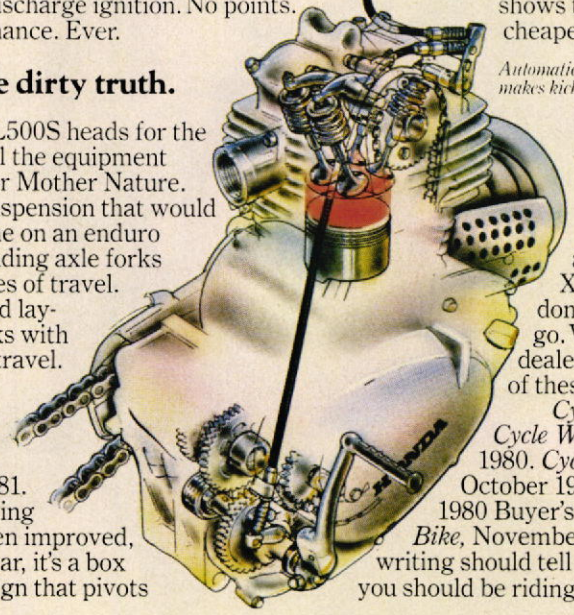
Meanwhile, back in town.

The XL500S, however, is anything but half-hearted on the street.

For all its power and torque, its engine is surprisingly smooth. Thanks to dual counter-balancers that dampen out vibration.

Its Honda-designed dual purpose tires hug the pavement, handle with predictability and ride smooth, even in the fast lane.

The XL500S comes complete with street legal lighting, refreshingly high gas mileage and a price tag that clearly shows that one bike is cheaper than two.



Automatic compression release makes kick starting easier.

A suggested reading list.

If you want to know more about the XL500S, you don't have far to go. Visit a Honda dealer. Or pick up any of these fine magazines. *Cycle,* May 1980. *Cycle World,* October 1980. *Cycle Guide,* October 1980. *Motorcyclist,* 1980 Buyer's Guide. *Dirt Bike,* November 1980. Their writing should tell you exactly what you should be riding. The XL500S.

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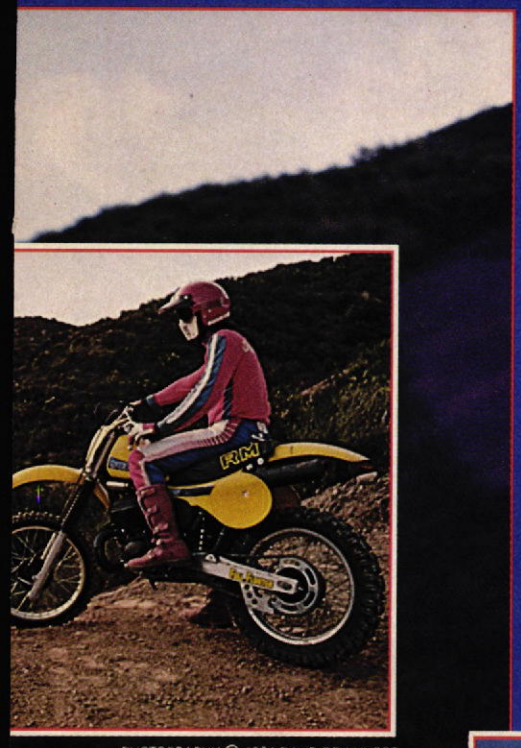
COMPARISON TRACK TEST:

The 465s

Suzuki RM465X vs. Yamaha YZ465H

Fighting for the biggest piece of the Open-class pie.

BY DAVID DEWHURST



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 DAVID DEWHURST

You might think Suzuki's RM465 is out to beat every bike in the Open class, but we don't believe it. In fact, we're sure that Suzuki will be happy if it only defeats *one* bike all year—Yamaha's YZ465. Other big-bore European bikes might beat the RM to a few checkered flags, but it's the Yamaha that is leading every bike in the race for sales

The YZ465 became so popular it sold out even before Marty Moates took one to victory at the USGP at Carlsbad in 1980. And with such a fantastic track record in only its first year of production, the Yamaha attracted something of a cult following. Almost as if it lived in a class of its own, the YZ simply became known as *the* 465.

To overcome such a charismatic motorcycle Suzuki has to do more than just beat the YZ on the track: It must also destroy the 465's image if the RM is truly to conquer the Open class. And the best way Suzuki can achieve that victory is to confront the Yamaha head-to-head, to beat it at its own game. So it's no coincidence that the RM displaces an exact 465cc. Suzuki knew it had to challenge the YZ where it really mattered, and it had the courage to attack what has become Yamaha's strongest marketing asset—its adopted name.

Suzuki hasn't stopped there, either. The new Full Floater suspension design confronts Yamaha's supposed technological rear-end supremacy. Its up-to-the-minute linkage system casts a dark shadow over the 10-year-old Monoshock concept. Even if it offers no major benefits, Suzuki's latest technology will grab the attention of a trend-conscious market that is always afraid of being left behind.

The aura of past glory can't always make up for showroom flair—and Suzuki and Yamaha both are aware of that marketing maxim. Yamaha knows, because its factory team is currently working on new linkage systems to adapt to the familiar Monoshock package. And Suzuki obviously knows what's important, or it wouldn't have hit the YZ so squarely amidships. While Yamaha might not yet be sinking, Suzuki has fired the opening salvo—and in the deep waters of the Open class, only one motorcycle is going to survive as *the* 465.

Continued

RM465: Tech Inspection

Engine:

Top End: Suzuki's new RM465X motor shares no parts with last year's T-model RM400. The X-model has a 6mm-wider 86mm bore, and a 3mm-shorter 80mm stroke. To reduce intake turbulence in its bigger engine, Suzuki has dispensed with case-reed induction, relying on a more conventional all-reed induction system with eight fiber-resin petals feeding gas through the piston port and also through three additional passageways into the crankcase. Gas is drawn from a 2mm-larger 38mm Mikuni carb. The larger piston uses one Keystone ring instead of two and compresses gas into a hemispherical combustion chamber that is offset radically to the rear of the head.

Bottom End: A new crank with a shorter stroke is housed in cases that combine a rear motor mount and a swingarm pivot location. A revised PEI ignition system is claimed to reduce backfiring while starting and give a more consistent spark at high rpm.

Drivetrain:

Primary Drive: Straight-cut gears still transmit power to a clutch of the same diameter. A deeper clutch basket, however, houses four more plates than in '80 to handle the extra horsepower. The new clutch basket also has an idler gear behind it to allow the use of primary kickstarting.

Gearbox: Internal gear ratios are identical to the T-model's, but gear material and heat treatment have been upgraded.

Suspension:

Front: The 43mm stanchion tubes on the Kayaba fork are 5mm larger than last year's. Oil volume has increased 195cc to 595cc in each leg. Damping has been slightly reduced in conjunction with a higher spring rate and a recommendation of zero static air pressure. Suzuki uses a short straight-rate spring with a 6-inch-long preload spacer, claiming that the shorter spring reduces unsprung weight and that the thin metal spacer gives a larger air volume for less progression in the overall wheel rate. Sliding friction is reduced by the use of twin bushings, one on the bottom of the stanchion tube and the other at the top of the slider.

Rear: Suzuki's Full Floater rear suspension uses the same shock and spring found on the RM125X and RM250X. Different linkage geometry provides the various wheel rates necessary for the three models. The Floater's aluminum rocker arm pivots in caged needle roller bearings while all other linkages rotate in Heim joints. Four rebound damping adjustments are made externally with a knurled ring at the top of the single Kayaba shock.

Wheels:

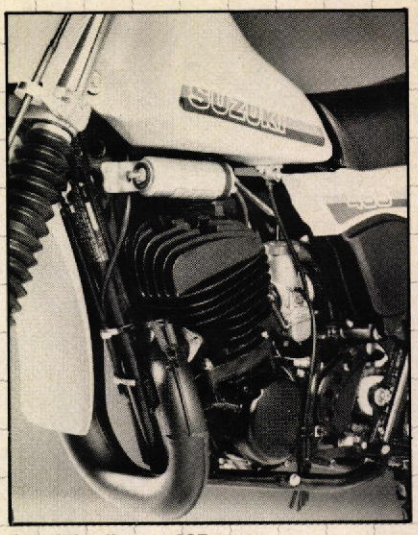
Suzuki uses stronger hubs with straight-pull spokes laced to redesigned Takasago rims. The front hub has the same 150mm diameter as last year's, but the rear full-width hub is 10mm smaller at 130mm. The latest Dunlop K390 tire is fitted to the RM465.

Frame:

The X-model chassis shares only 4130 chromoly steel with the old T-model. The new wheelbase is 15mm longer, in part because of a half-degree shallower head angle and 1mm less trail. Much of the increase, however, comes from a longer extruded aluminum swingarm. New aluminum chain-adjuster blocks slide inside the hollow swingarm legs and a simple nut and bolt at the end of the arm alters their location. The new frame also provides a one-inch-lower seat.

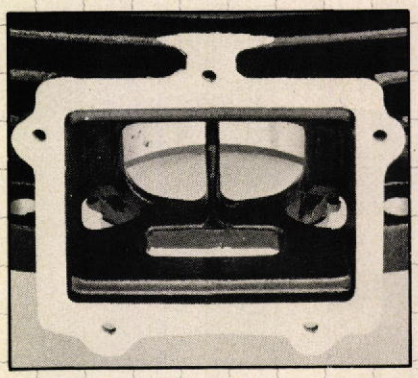
Details:

Twin dual-stage air filters, each mounted vertically on either side of the shock, are connected by a common plenum chamber which the 465 shares with the new RM250. Soft rubber chain rollers and a new fixed chain guide are claimed to reduce noise and increase chain life. The new humped gas tank has a 0.5-liter greater capacity.



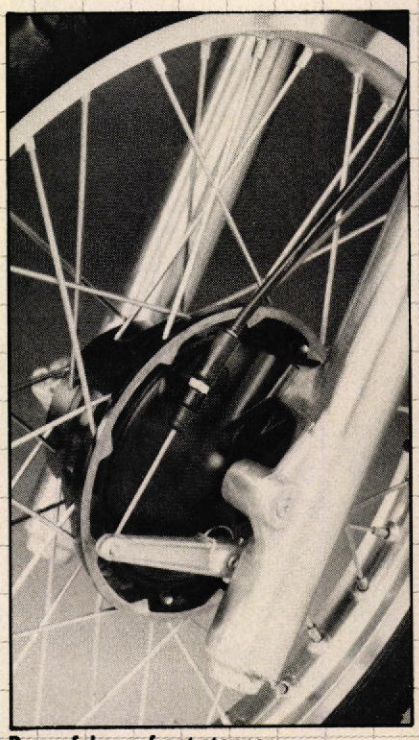
Suzuki's all-new 465 motor

Primary-kick and peaky-power.



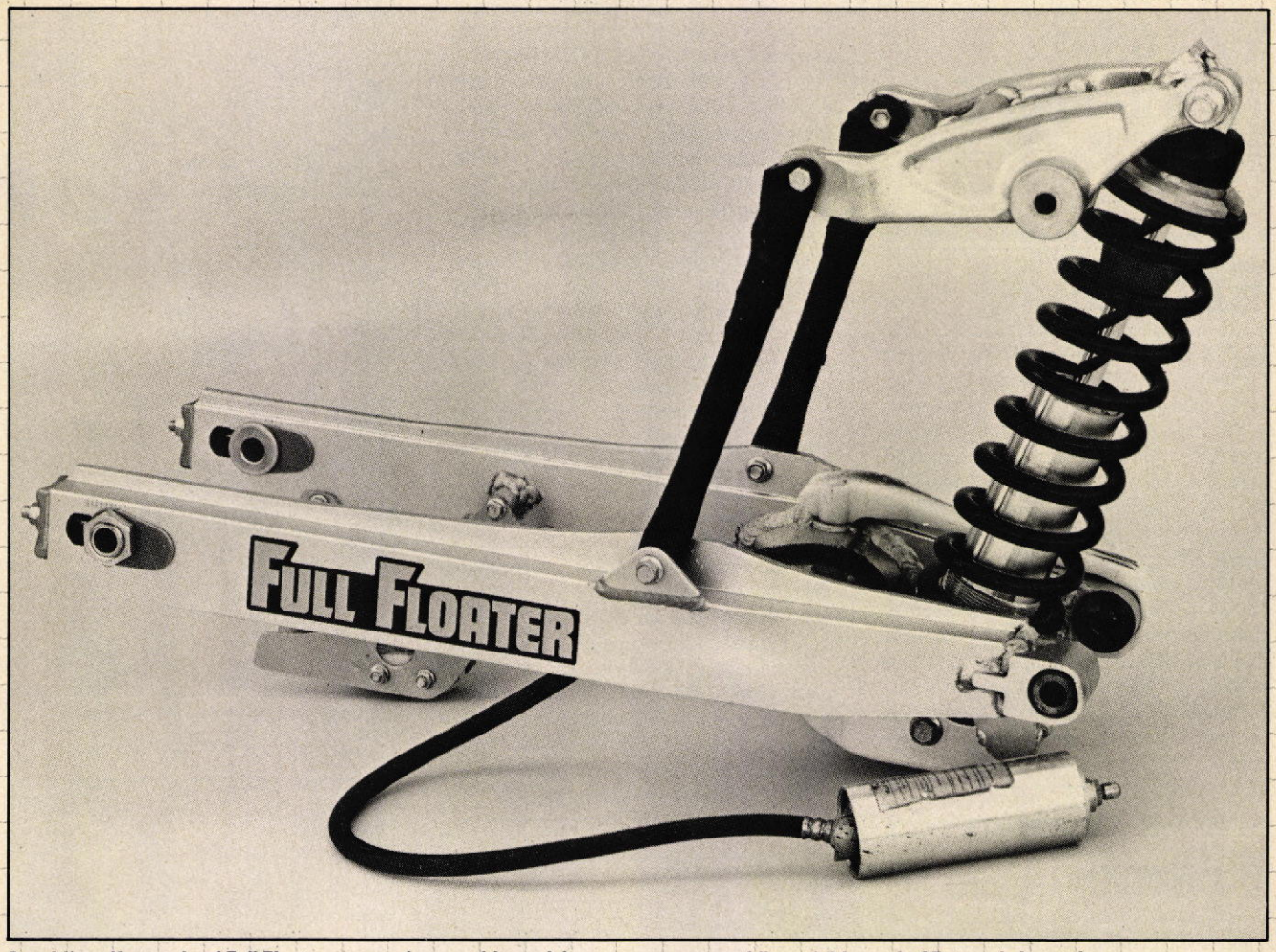
A conventional bridged inlet port

Aided by three crankcase openings.



Powerful new front stopper

Conventional and straight-laced.



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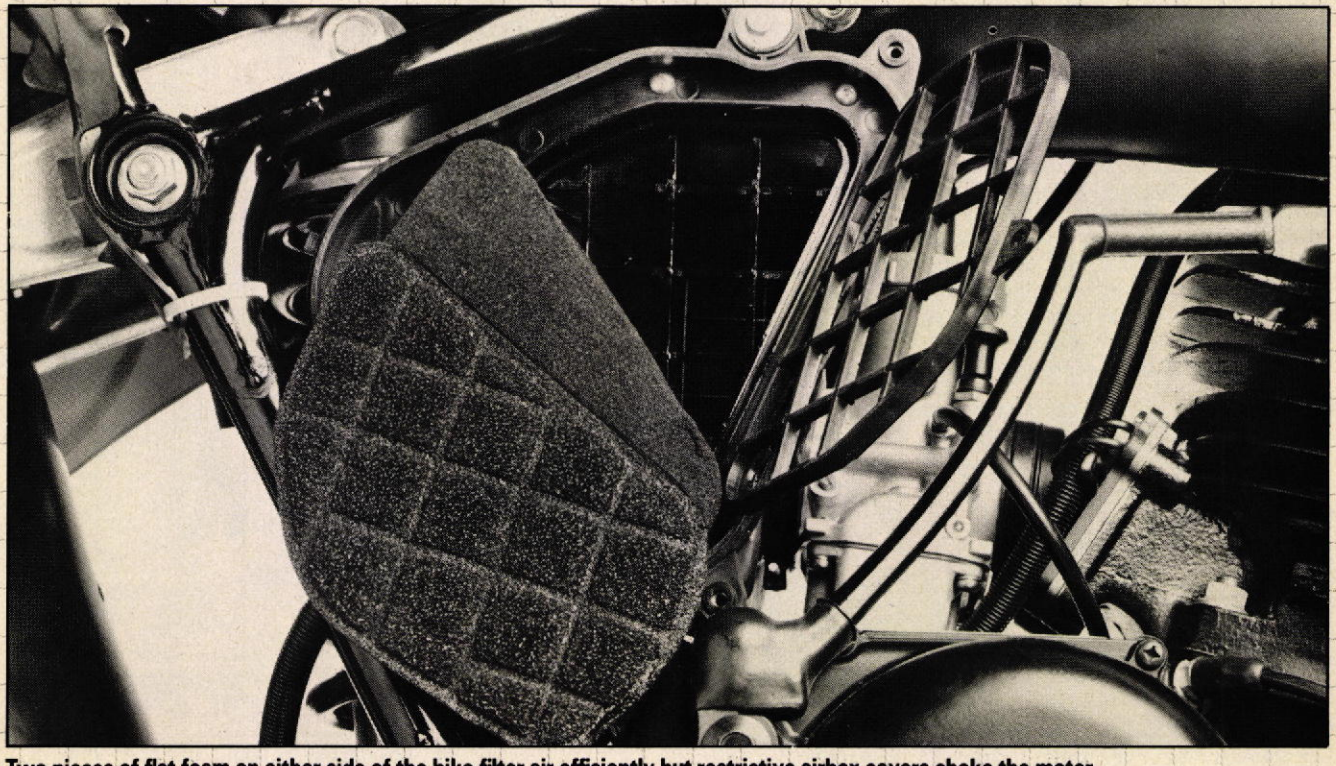
Suzuki's self-contained Full Floater suspension provides a rising rate geometry while weighing only 25 pounds in total



PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 JACK WRIGHT

Two pieces of flat foam on either side of the bike filter air efficiently but restrictive airbox covers choke the motor

Continued

YZ465: Tech Inspection

Engine:

With two exceptions, the '81 YZ motor is virtually unchanged internally. Upgraded steel in the second-gear pinion helps to prevent breakages, and a new gearbox breather vents air out through the top of the clutch actuating shaft rather than last year's primary case location. Externally, a new ignition coil is used to provide a better spark at low cranking speeds, although the ignition advance curve remains unchanged. The main power increase comes from a new exhaust system. More low-end punch is claimed by eliminating the bulge used in the '80 model front pipe. A slight reduction in the volume of the pipe's midsection is also claimed to improve high-rpm performance.

Frame:

The '81 YZ chassis, too, is little changed, apart from a 1.5-degree steeper head angle. The new 28.5-degree design also allows a corresponding 12mm decrease in trail. 10mm-taller footpegs are the only other change to this year's chassis.

Suspension:

Front: Stanchion-tube diameter is increased 5mm to 43mm. Compression damping is decreased 10 percent, while rebound damping is reduced by 12 percent. Phosphor-bronze bushings are now used at the top of the slider and the bottom of the stanchion tube to reduce sliding friction.

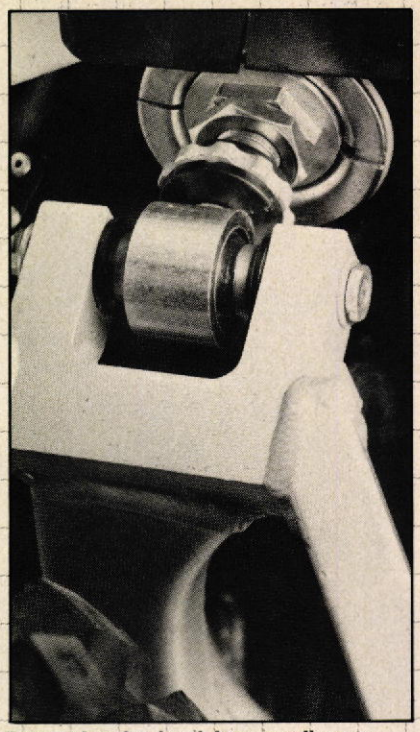
Rear: The monoshock also has reduced damping, and a longer taper on the damping adjustment shaft gives six more useable settings than last year's monoshock. There are a total of 30 audible click adjustments on the shock, but the damping is completely unrestricted after only 24 clicks, making positions 25 through 30 redundant. Last year the damping orifice was completely unrestricted after only 18 click adjustments. A larger reservoir mounted on the front downtube increases damping fluid capacity.

Brakes:

The front twin-leading-shoe design is unchanged, but the rear hub is entirely new. Now shared with the YZ250, the rear hub has a less-conical shape with a stronger center section. The rear torque arm rotates on a larger front bearing surface to help prevent breakage. The 465 now uses the same recessed-head sprocket mounting bolts as the YZ250. The rear hub is also secured by a 3mm-larger-diameter axle.

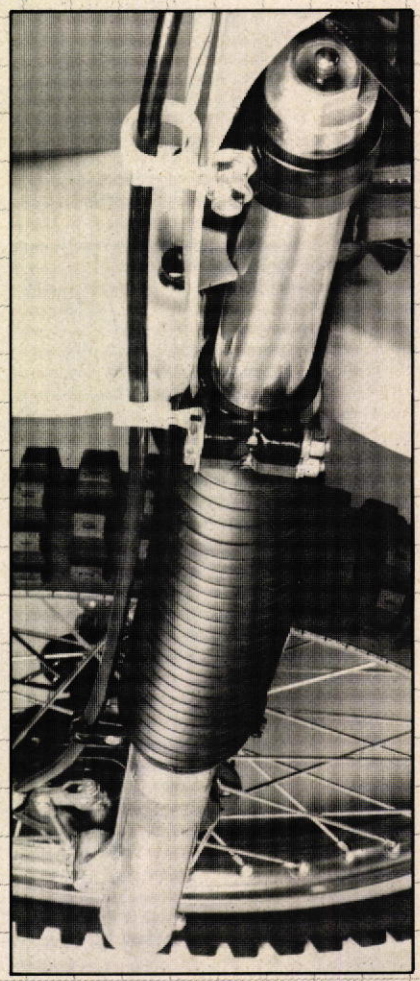
Details:

The airbox is now larger to improve access while retaining last year's filter. A new steel shift lever has a folding end. Hand controls are also improved with a Whirl-Pull twistgrip, easily removed two-piece lever clamps and shorter lever blades. New rubber grips are also used on the handlebar, which is bolted to new rubber mounts. The redesigned clamps better resist distortion in a fall. An aluminum head stay softer than the unit on the 1980 model is less prone to vibration-induced fatigue cracks. Hard rubber chain rollers with nylon bearings reduce noise. Upgraded IRC tires are mounted on gold-anodized rims.



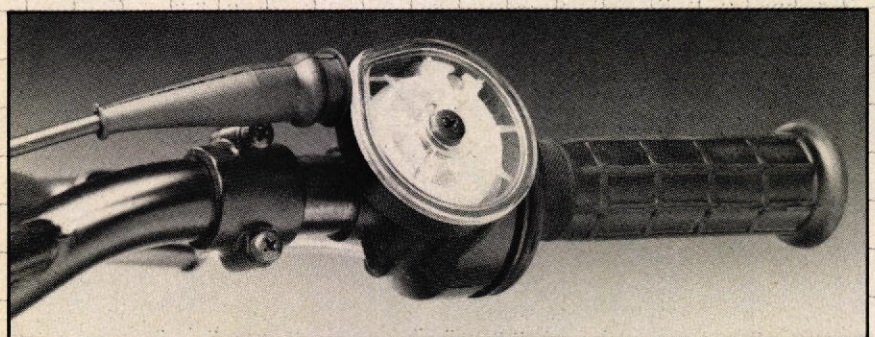
Exposed preload and damper adjusters

Out in the open for easy tuning.



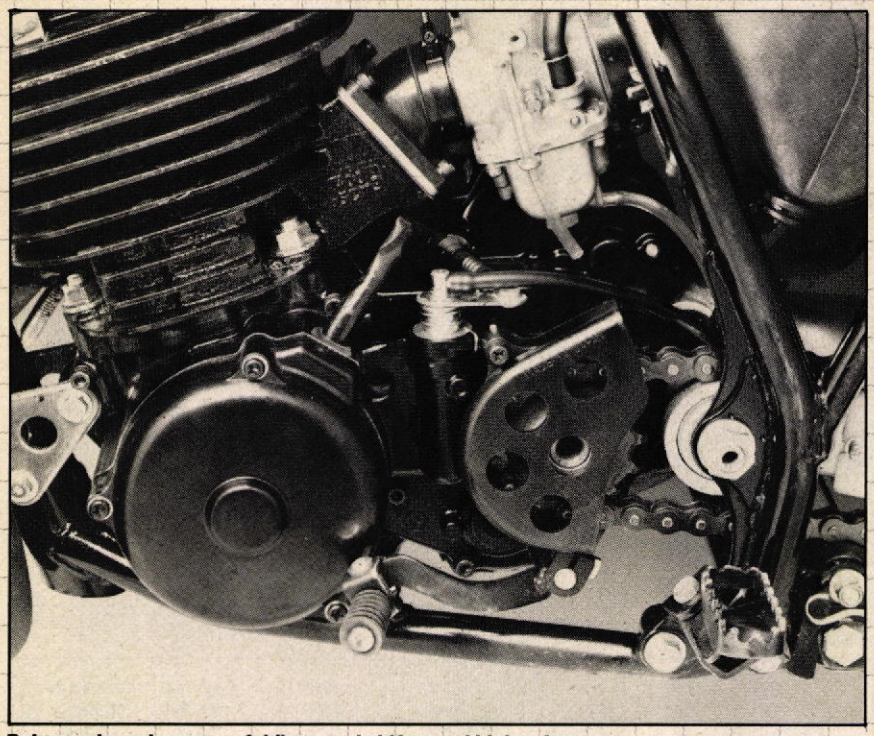
Kayaba bumps up the size of its fork

Nothing like a great pair of legs.



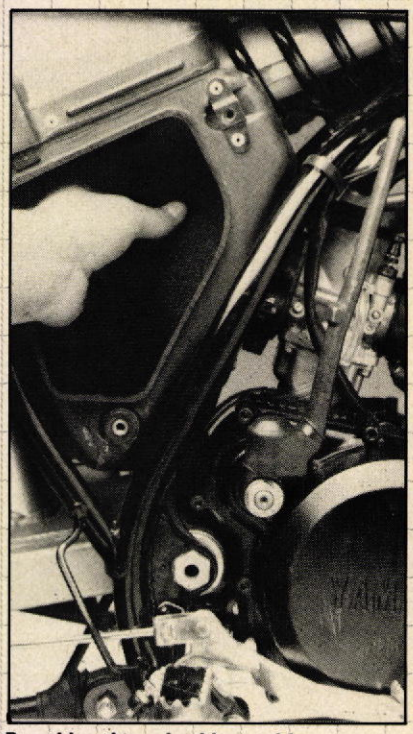
See-through Whirl-Pull throttle and revised rubber grips

Making the YZ more comfortable and less prone to crash damage.



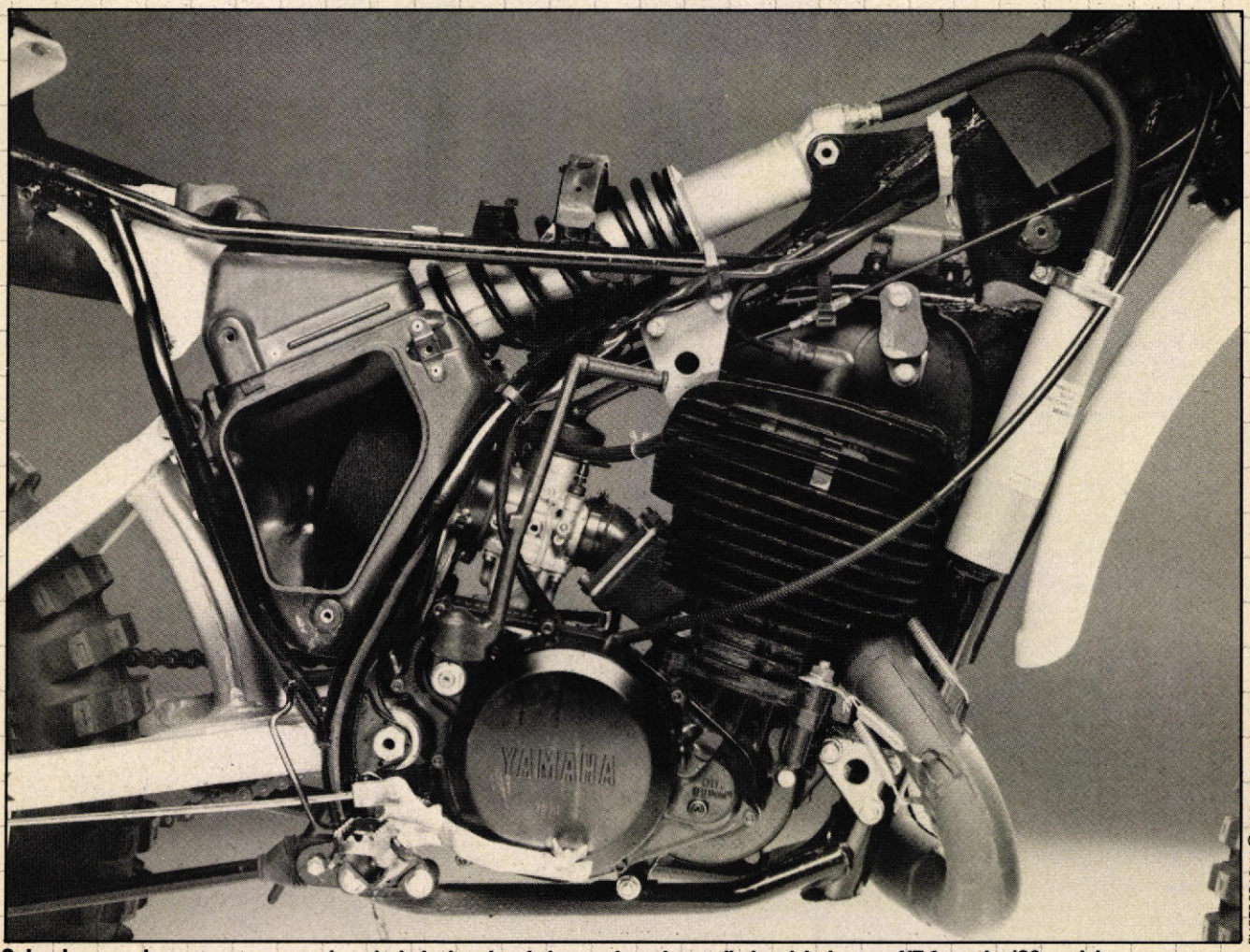
Relocated gearbox vent, folding steel shifter and higher footpegs

Minor changes in the evolution of the most successful bike in the Open class.



Breathing through a bigger airbox

Making room for easy access.

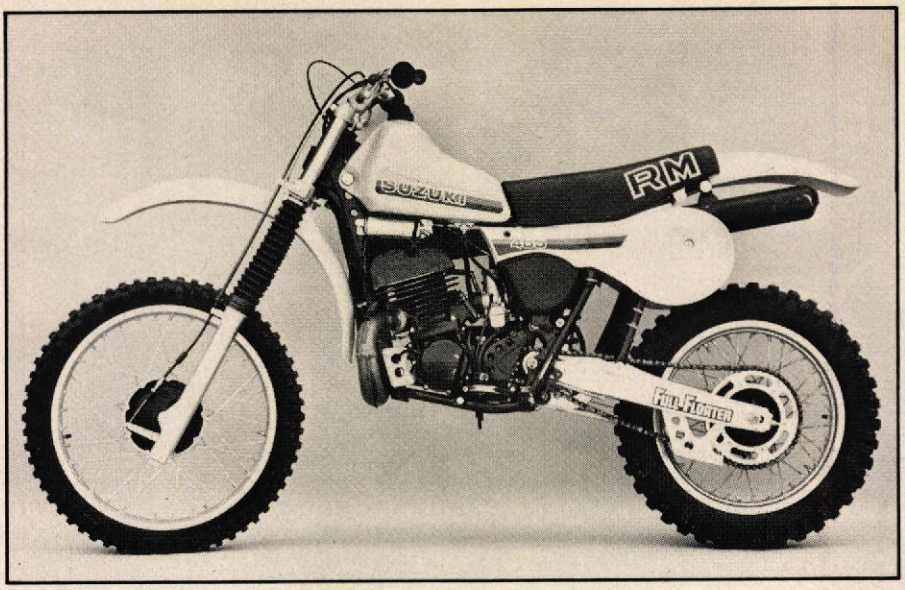


Only a larger-volume remote reservoir and a bulgeless head pipe on the exhaust distinguish the new YZ from the '80 model

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 JACK WRIGHT

Continued

Suzuki RM465X



SPECIFICATIONS:

IMPORTER: U.S. Suzuki Motor Corporation
3251 East Imperial Highway
Brea, California 92621

CATEGORY: motocross

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $2169

ENGINE

Type ..... two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement ..... one reed-valve-controlled intake, six transfers, one exhaust
Bore and stroke ..... 86.0mm x 80.0mm
Displacement 464.7cc
Compression ratio (corrected) 6.4:1
Carburetion ..... one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Air filter ..... twin dual-stage washable oiled foam elements
Lubrication ..... pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system ..... primary kick
Ignition ..... internal-rotor magneto CDI
Charging system ..... none

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... straight-cut gears; 2.384:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #520 chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 3.500:1 (14/49) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.000	16.688	4.7
II	1.625	13.559	5.8
III	1.263	10.538	7.4
IV	1.000	8.344	9.4
V	0.869	7.251	10.8

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter/10.4 in. (265mm)
Rear ..... Full Floater, 20mm spring preload adjustment, 4-way adjustable rebound damping/10.8 in. (275mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... drum, single-leading shoe
Rear ..... drum, single-leading shoe, straight-pull, cable-operated

TIRES

Front ..... 3.00 x 21 Dunlop Sports K390
Rear ..... 5.10 x 18 Dunlop Sports K390

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight ..... 234 lbs. (106kg)
Weight distribution ..... 46.7% front, 53.3% rear
Wheelbase ..... 58.0 to 59.0 in. (1473 to 1499mm)
Seat height ..... 38.0 in. (965mm)
Handlebar width ..... 33.0 in. (838mm)
Footpeg height ..... 16.6 in. (422mm)
Ground clearance ..... 14.0 in. (356mm), at engine cradle
Steering head angle ..... 29.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.8 in. (122mm)
Frame ..... tubular chromoly steel, single front downtube
Fuel tank ..... plastic, 2.2 gal. (8.5/), no reserve
Instrumentation ..... none

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (observed) ..... 88 mph (142 kph)

WARRANTY: none

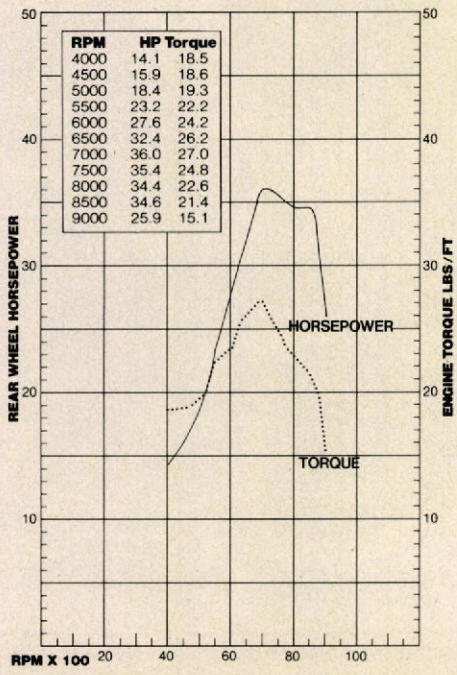
AVAILABLE COLORS: yellow

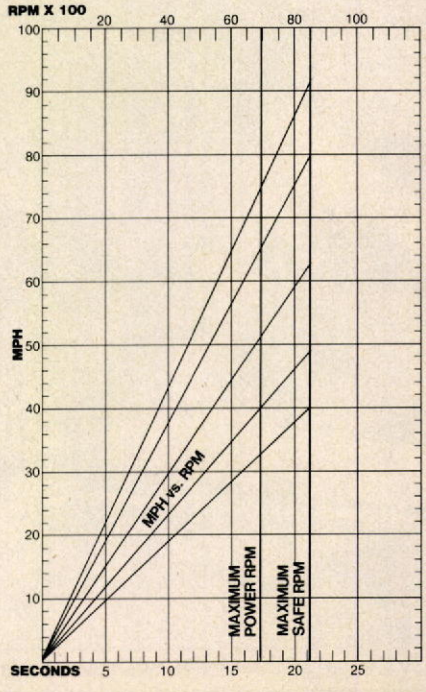
All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make & Model	Horsepower	Wheel Travel Front/Rear, in.	Weight (fuel tank empty), lb.	Weight bias Front/Rear percent	Transmission, number of speeds
Suzuki RM465X	36.0	10.4/10.8	234	46.7/53.3	5
Yamaha YZ465H	39.8	11.0/12.4	235	47.2/52.8	5
Husqvarna 430CR	33.3	11.9/11.3	239	46.5/53.5	6
Honda CR450R	NA	11.0/12.5	236	47.3/52.7	4
Kawasaki KX420	34.0	11.0/11.3	250	46.4/53.6	5
Maico 450M1	37.0	12.3/12.0	236	46.6/53.4	5

PERFORMANCE:





Yamaha YZ465H

SPECIFICATIONS:

IMPORTER: Yamaha Motor Corporation U.S.A.
6555 Katella Avenue
Cypress, California 90630

CATEGORY: motocross

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: $2149

ENGINE

Type ..... two-stroke vertical single
Port arrangement ..... one reed-valve-controlled intake, four main transfers, one booster transfer, one exhaust
Bore and stroke ..... 85.0mm x 82.0mm
Displacement 465.3cc
Compression ratio (corrected) 7.0:1
Carburetion ..... one 38mm Mikuni slide/needle
Air filter ..... two-stage washable oiled foam element
Lubrication ..... pre-mixed fuel and oil
Starting system ..... primary kick
Ignition ..... flywheel-magneto CDI
Charging system ..... none

DRIVETRAIN

Primary drive ..... helical gears; 2.625:1 ratio
Clutch ..... wet, multi-plate
Final drive ..... #520 chain (5/8-in. pitch, 1/4-in. width); 3.286:1 (14/46) ratio

Gear	Internal gear ratio	Overall gear ratio	MPH per 1000 RPM
I	2.143	18.485	4.2
II	1.750	15.095	5.2
III	1.316	11.351	6.9
IV	1.045	9.014	8.7
V	0.833	7.185	10.9

SUSPENSION/WHEEL TRAVEL

Front ..... air-spring, 43mm stanchion tube diameter/11.0 in. (280mm)
Rear ..... Monoshock, 25mm spring preload adjustment, 24-way adjustable rebound damping/12.4 in. (315mm)

BRAKES

Front ..... drum, double-leading shoe
Rear ..... drum, single-leading shoe, rod-operated

TIRES

Front ..... 3.00 x 21 IRC Motocross ZMK11
Rear ..... 5.10 x 18 IRC Motocross ZMK11

DIMENSIONS AND CAPACITIES

Weight ..... 235 lbs. (107kg)
Weight distribution ..... 47.2% front, 52.8% rear
Wheelbase ..... 58.5 to 59.5 in. (1486 to 1511mm)
Seat height ..... 37.0 in. (940mm)
Handlebar width ..... 33.0 in. (838mm)
Footpeg height ..... 15.3 in. (389mm)
Ground clearance ..... 12.5 in. (318mm), at engine cradle
Steering head angle ..... 28.5 degrees from vertical
Front wheel trail ..... 4.72 in. (120mm)
Frame ..... tubular chromoly steel, single front downtube
Fuel tank ..... plastic, 2.2 gal. (8.5/), no reserve
Instrumentation ..... none

PERFORMANCE

Top speed (observed) ..... 90 mph (145 kph)

WARRANTY: none

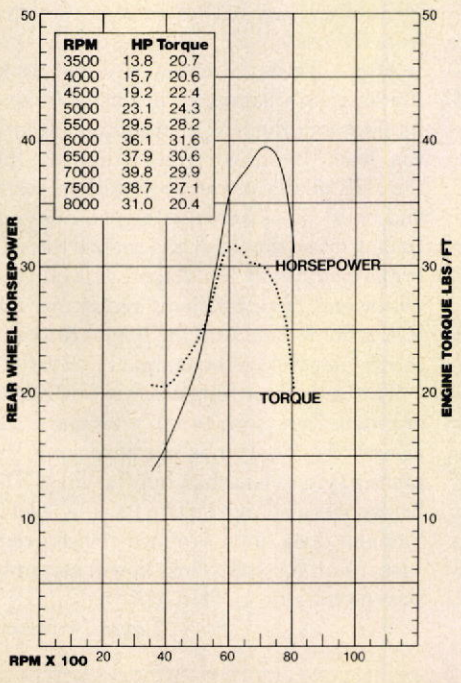
AVAILABLE COLORS: yellow

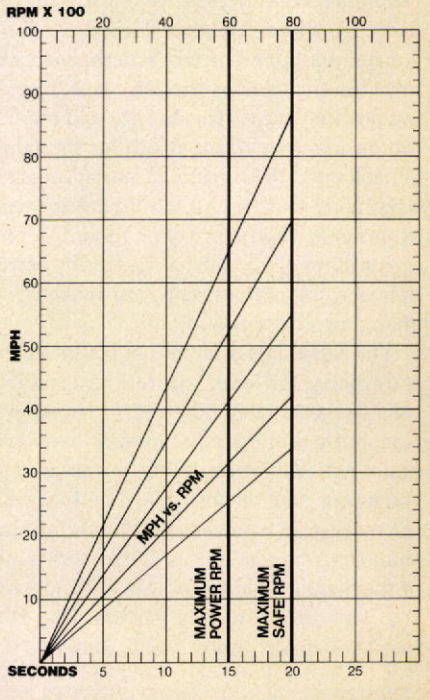
All weights and measurements are taken with machine unladen and fuel tank empty.

COMPARATIVE TEST DATA:

Make & Model	Horsepower	Wheel Travel Front/Rear, in.	Weight (fuel tank empty), lb.	Weight bias Front/Rear percent	Transmission, number of speeds
Yamaha YZ465H	39.8	11.0/12.4	235	47.2/52.8	5
Suzuki RM465X	36.0	10.4/10.8	234	46.7/53.3	5
Husqvarna 430CR	33.3	11.9/11.3	239	46.5/53.5	6
Honda CR450R	NA	11.0/12.5	236	47.3/52.7	4
Kawasaki KX420	34.0	11.0/11.3	250	46.4/53.6	5
Maico 450M1	37.0	12.3/12.0	236	46.6/53.4	5

PERFORMANCE:





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RM465X vs. YZ465H: Which Will Win?

• You'll never confuse the two 465s. They share identical engine capacity and almost the same color scheme, but that's all. In every other way these two Japanese behemoths are very, very different. When you throw a leg over either of them in the pits, or fly them off a jump on the track, their individual characteristics become instantly apparent.

The Yamaha's lower seat and more spacious riding position feels naturally right.

The Suzuki, while better than previous RMs, still has a high seat and pegs coupled with a low bar that makes the rider feel a little cramped. The first favorable impression, then, leans toward the Yamaha—an impression that is reinforced when the Suzuki is reluctant to kick into life.

Yet once the two bikes are behind the start-gate and in third gear, preferences start changing. The Yamaha blasts off the line with a casual dumping of the clutch, and while the Suzuki's taller gearing calls for more clutch slippage, both bikes hit the first turn with handlebars locked.

From that point on the Yamaha seems to have the edge during the early laps. Its riding position is easy to adapt to and the YZ motor does everything it can for the rider. Whack open the throttle, it doesn't matter what rpm, and the YZ465 lunges forward even faster than last year's model. There are no steps or sudden lurches in the power delivery, just a fluid rush that makes gear changing almost redundant.

The Suzuki, too, is fast, but it lacks the YZ's hefty low-end grunt. The mixture-sensitive RM responds well to leaner jetting, but it still has a flat low-end response and a noticeable step in the powerband as the motor gets on the pipe. The RM calls for more gear changes and clutch-fanning than the Yamaha, unless you uncork some of the Suzuki's hidden power. By removing the two outer airbox covers the RM breathes much more easily. Indeed, the dyno revealed a 500-rpm increase on the top end, with a healthy gain in low-end response. This is noticeable on the track, too, because the motor loses its low-speed blubber and therefore requires far less gearbox attention.

With the motors on a more equal footing, the RM's more compliant suspension pushes the Suzuki into a clear lead. The Kayaba front ends of the RM and YZ do an equally brilliant job of flattening the track, even though they use different spring and damping rates. But when you sample the rear ends of both bikes you'll find a world of difference. The new Full Floater design from Suzuki does an amazing job of keeping the rear wheel hooked up to the track, thanks, in part, to its low initial spring rate. And when big holes cross your path the rising-rate geometry refuses to bottom out. Even with spring preload reduced to its lower limit the Suzuki hardly ever thumps its rider, despite its wafer-thin seat.

In contrast, the Yamaha's plush saddle is a constant friend because the Monoshock rear end never completely cushions out all the bumps. The YZ always feels harsher than the RM because the Monoshock's straight-rate geometry cannot handle extremes in the track surface. The Yamaha can't be described as bad because a year ago it was as good as anything around, but the latest Suzuki suspension technology just better isolates its rider from the track.

After a few laps running neck-and-neck, the Yamaha's harshness begins to fatigue its rider and the RM pilot motors off into the lead. Its plush ride enhances the Suzuki's ability to rail around tight turns and cross washboards without a misstep. In fact, if you don't fall and pretzel the soft brake pedal and handlebar, or stall the motor and have problems restarting, the RM is home free. And the longer the race, the greater will be the margin of victory.

This year, then, Suzuki's new Full Floater is definitely going to win sales and races against the YZ. It may not have sunk Yamaha's Open-class ship, but the latest RM has knocked a large hole in its side. And if Yamaha does not introduce revised rear suspension for 1982, Suzuki will certainly assume the title as THE 465.

—David Dewhurst

Ride Review

• You don't have to drop a safe on me. I can take a hint. Hey, I know that both of these 465s are fast, faster than most of the racers who ever swing a leg over either one. But that doesn't mean that I think they're dead even.

You can win on the RM, I know that—at least if you're capable of winning. It feels a little clumsy at anything less than WFO, but like most RMs it just keeps getting better the faster you ride it. But only when you're getting everything it's got do you strut the *best* of the RM's stuff. And it takes a closer watch on the RM's powerband to extract all of that potential goodness, because unlike the YZ, the RM has a powerband. You've got to work the shifter to get the RM to work.

Not the YZ. Explosive power from the first exhaust pulse ripping through the pipe until you've just *got* to shut off is the way the YZ gets fast. I don't know why anyone even bothered to put a shifter on the bike at all. There's just no powerband to fall off of. And even if the RM rear end hooks up better, the YZ steers better, handles a flat, hard track better and is just overall more forgiving of mistakes.

Like I said, you can win on either 465, and a lot of riders are going to be doing just that. But I'm going to be doing *my* winning on a YZ. *—Dean Taylor*

• As far as lap times are concerned, neither one of these moto-monsters holds any decided advantage over the other. They're so similar in almost every respect that deciding which 465 is the *right* 465 boils down to a matter of personal preference.

The Suzuki, therefore, gets my vote, because like a snug-fitting pair of jeans, it conforms to my riding style more closely than the Yamaha does. From the moment I kick its light-flywheeled motor into life until I roll the whole muddy mess back into the van at day's end, the RM makes me more relaxed and confident. It's more forgiving and turns more crisply, plus it responds better to the throttle, too. And the Full Floater soaks up abuse at the rear more effectively than the Monoshock.

Actually, that's one reason why I prefer the Suzuki. Its rising-rate rear suspension is right at the leading edge of motocross technology, while the Monoshock concept seems to be coming to the end of its useful life, even though there's not that much difference in the way either system performs.

So given a choice, I'd clearly opt for the RM465. But if, for some reason, I *had* to ride a YZ465, it wouldn't exactly break my heart. Like I said, they're that close.

—Paul Dean ●

AND NOW, A WORD ABOUT WHY YOU SHOULD BE READING CYCLE GUIDE EVERY MONTH:

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We don't expect you to buy our magazine because it has tips on gourmet dining. Nor because it tells you what the latest in jogging shoes is. We expect you to like CYCLE GUIDE because it's the best-written, most thorough, most entertaining dose of high-intensity moto-info you can buy. A kind of monthly one-stop shopping center for all your motorcycle input, from new-model tests to inside tips, secrets of the sport, new ways to have fun with your bike and evaluations of the accessories made to help you have that fun.

Street & Dirt

Naturally, we don't confine our interest to one kind of motorcycling. For instance, we think there's nothing in all the world more fun than doing cross-ups with the spectacular MX machinery available today. Not to mention dodging trees and rocks in enduros. In fact, if it's something you can do with a motorcycle off-road, we're sure to do it.

Which doesn't mean, of course, that we don't work the other side of the trees. Whenever we can, we turn our lively and exhaustive street tests into staff rides, blitzing the twisties and eating up thousands of miles in touring. Because we love street motorcycles as much as dirt bikes.

Just like you.

Big & Small

Some people seem to think you can't have fun on anything that doesn't have a handful of cylinders and eyeball-squashing power. And some people think that God meant Man only to ride bikes with seven-speed gearboxes and a teacup-full of engine. We're not like either group. We can have fun testing and writing about anything with two wheels and a motor, from crypto-chopper to minibike. So our entire staff is totally conversant with the whole motorcycle spectrum, from tiddler to terror. And consequently, whatever your preferences in displacement and power, you'll find them within the pages of CYCLE GUIDE.

Because fun isn't measured in cubic inches.

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Ours is a staff of expert riders. Qualified to ride or race almost anything. But it's not our ability to turn hot laps that makes us proud of our work. It's our ability to turn hot licks on the typewriter.

That's because while there are a lot of good riders around, there aren't many who can turn the experience of riding into something others can share and delight in. Or learn from. So we've been very selective about who writes for us, making sure that riding skill is matched by writing skill. The result isn't Shakespeare, but we think our ways of taking you along with us over the jumps, across the apexes and through the woods on two wheels are better than anyone's in the business.

Including Shakespeare.

Them & Us

There are a lot of motorcycle magazines on your newsstand. Some specialize in dirt bikes, some in street bikes, others in choppers. Some are very nice to flip through in idle moments. And like you, because we're full-on motorcyclists, we flip through them too, occasionally even finding something we like to read. But like you, we think there's a world of difference between an "occasional" magazine and one that delivers the kind of excitement, enjoyment and insight we'd feel good about spending our money on.

The occasional magazines are still in the rack. You're holding the one that we know delivers the goods every month.

CYCLE GUIDE

HARD RIDERS WITH THE RIGHT LINES.

PRODUCT EVALUATION:

Chase-Harper Compac Tank Bag

When too much isn't enough.

• Tankbags sit in a handy middle ground. They're an alternative to the garbage-bag-and-bungee-cord method of packing, and they cost a lot less than full-dress gear. Tankbags are ideal for short rides or an occasional overnighter. And most are small, light and easy to install.

But not all. Some manufacturer was bound to build the world's largest and most complex tankbag, and Chase-Harper took the honors. The Compac 1150 Modular Tank Bag System is as complicated as its name, but the five-piece assemblage offers an amazing 2200 cubic inches of space for gear.

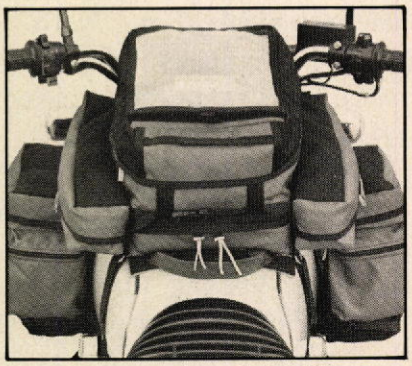
"Modular" refers to the various components that can be added on to the center bag. Side pouches sling across the tank and hang from either side of the main bag, and each side pouch is divided into three compartments. Two long, thin pouches called "weenie bags" fit alongside the main bag. The system, besides carrying a $153.30 pricetag, is replete with 15 buckles, 13 straps and 11 compartments.

Strong, Cordura fabric assures the Compac 1150 will last, and construction and detailing are first-rate. The center bag is of fairly standard design, and it does a good job of swallowing gear. There's even a thick foam block inside the bag that can be cut to fit tools.

Moving out from the center bag, though, the system's function begins to deteriorate. When mounted on a Kawasaki KZ750, the side pouches rest on the upper cylinder head and get quite warm, and the pouches jostle and rub the rider's knees. The weenie bags are such a strange shape that they seem designed for carrying knock-down pool cues or Polish sausage, because little else will fit.

Difficult installation also mars the system's appeal. The bottom pad must be marked and cut to allow access to the gas cap, and then the edges of the cut must be sewn or seared to prevent tearing. Once the mounting pad is on, several serious flaws become apparent. With the pad cut for a specific bike, the Compac system is rendered useless for bikes with different tank shapes. And, because of the difficulty in routing the straps beneath the tank, the pad is likely to be a semi-permanent addition to the bike. This clutters the appearance of the bike when the Compac bags are removed, and it keeps dirt, moisture and spilled gas trapped beneath the pad. This is an invitation to paint damage that can only be avoided by frequent and time-consuming removal of the pad.

All the difficulties with mounting are indicative of the central problem with the entire system: It appears to have been designed without the advice of seasoned riders. Some major rethinking could make the 1150 a spacious alternative to conventional tankbags, but in its current form the design flaws overshadow its usefulness. The Compac 1150 is made by Chase-Harper, 1830 North Jameson Lane, Santa Barbara, California 93108. —*Riley Tharp*



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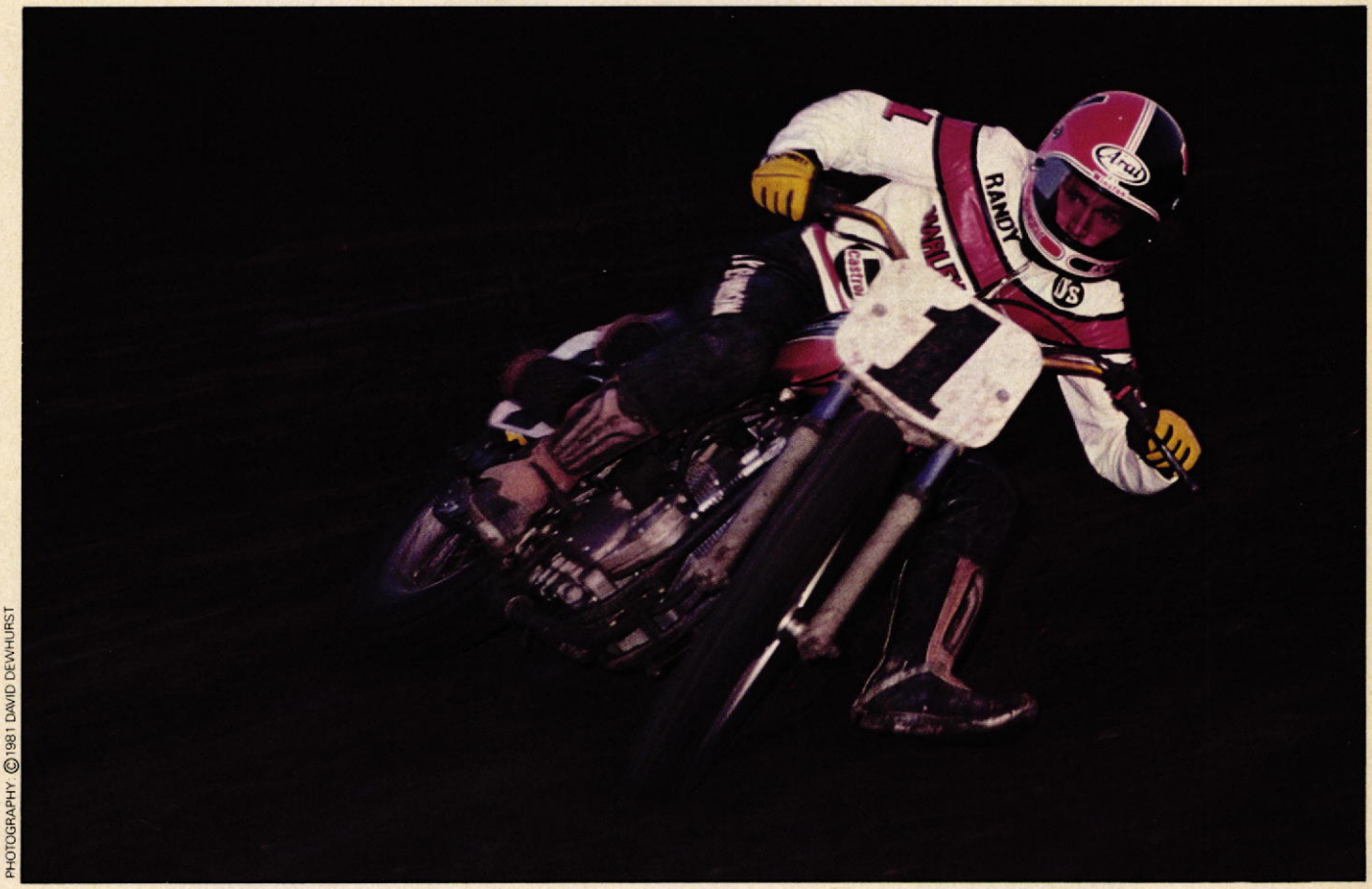
California Swing

Springsteen returns, and Honda and Yamaha officially infiltrate.



PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 DAVID DEWHURST

• Jay Springsteen said just one thing to the San Jose crowd before spraying them with victory champagne: "Harley-Davidson!" He really didn't have to say it, though. Everyone knew that his factory XR750 was King of the San Jose Mile. After all, he had a full straight-away lead on second-place finisher, privateer Gary Scott.

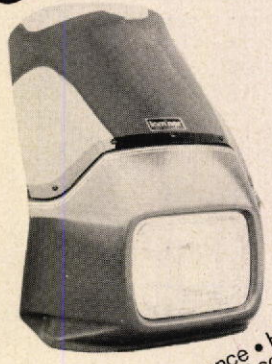
What Springsteen should have said was: "Harley-Davidson and Jay Springsteen!" Because prior to the SJ 25-lapper, people were doubtful if The Springer was at all back to his championship-winning form of 1978. Sure, he left February's Houston doubleheader with a helmetful of points, but he was absent from the Ascot TT in early April because the week before that race he crashed a trail bike and jammed some knuckles in his hand. And missing the Ascot TT is critical, since most Winston Pro insiders consider it the first *real* dirttrack test of the season.

©1981 PATRICK BEHAR

Mike Kidd won Ascot, riding Mert Lawwill's Yamaha TT500, while fellow privateer and former champ Steve Eklund put in a hard and steady ride for second—and left Ascot with the Winston Pro lead. So Springsteen started the California Swing—four races jammed into five weeks—riding shot-

Continued

SPORT



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Winning makes for a dandy life, says H-D's Randy and his wife

But turn off the bubble machine, says Ms. Griffis.

gun to Eklund. And as one Harley team member said, getting a good start in California is an indicator of two things for the rest of the long, long season: You have the horsepower to win and the reliability to finish. Consistency, some say, is the key to winning the Grand National championship.

So while Springsteen dazzled the Dudley Perkins Turn Four grandstand crowd with his feet-on-the-pegs sliding, head tucked in and throttle wide open at San Jose, he wasn't consistent. Only three weeks before, he crashed in his Sacramento Mile qualifying heat and didn't make his second straight main event for '81.

On the other hand, Mike Kidd mounted a Harley for the Sacramento Mile, and came in fourth. He remounted the same Harley for the San Jose Mile three weeks later for a sixth, despite a broken cylinder head stud which became a two-second star on ABC's "Wide World of Sports" the following Sunday afternoon. Further, Kidd finished fourth at the Ascot Half-Mile the week after San Jose, enough to put him only six points behind Springsteen—proof that consistency, with a dollop of winning, is the solution to a successful seasonal points chase.

Steve Eklund's consistency paid off, too. He left Sacramento with the series lead after a tenth-place finish. But nobody really paid Eklund any mind at Sacramento. Instead, the railbirds flocked to the Honda pit for the official debut of the NS750 racer. It had finished third at a non-points Ascot half-mile a couple of weeks earlier, and optimism was high in the Honda garage. But optimism doesn't win Grand National races—horsepower does. And the Honda was short on

Filice took third at Houston's TT

But zeroed-out in California.

power, especially for a mile racetrack. The NS's best finish for the Sacramento evening was a ninth by Jeff Haney in the trophy dash. So the Honda men went back home for a little soul-searching—and to the dyno for a lot of power-searching.

There was no Yamaha vee-twin to be seen at Sacramento. Mert Lawwill and his riders, Mike Kidd and rookie Jim Filice, had spent a day testing the Virago-powered bike at the Porterville half-mile track, but discarded it in favor of two Harleys for Sacramento. Like the

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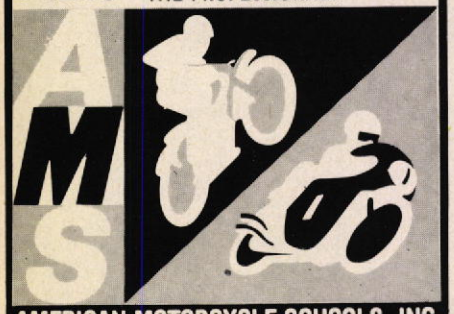

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Honda, the Yamaha had anemic cylinders. No power, no race. But by San Jose time, the Yamaha's dyno numbers looked more impressive. Enough for Filice to saddle up on the adobe clay track and qualify 26th, for a berth in a heat.

The Honda pit wasn't as successful. The team had cured a water leak discovered after Sacramento, but they still couldn't flush out enough horsepower. So the NS750 team personnel gathered their tools even before qualifying ended, and prepared to head back to their Gardena lab for more wrench turning and dyno testing.

An AMA official rode up to the Honda pit, where there was little activity. Official: "You gonna scratch?" The question was more an affirmation by the official—he just wanted the nod from Haney. Haney nodded, and the official yelled into his headset microphone, "No. 28 is a scratch."

Then Honda's Jerry Griffith replied in response to a question about Spencer's bike, "We're out of it." And Honda's watertight San Jose coffin was nailed shut. Spencer sat dejected in the pit, arms folded and head bowed. There was nothing more to say, and the pit was as silent as a Sunday morning prayer.

There was no time for praying in the Roberts/Lawwill Racing camp. The crew was busy fine-tuning Kidd's Harley and Filice's XV750 Yamaha. The R/L Racing pit drew a large crowd; most of the motorcycle press west of the Rockies (which is where most of the motorcycle press is, anyway) and enough curious people to stock the "Name That Tuning Fork" audience were there. And during the commercial break, Yamaha race team manager Ken Clark hustled some Japanese engineers on stage for a look behind the curtains. (Remember, now, the Virago racer is supposedly *not* a factory effort . . .) Clark was pointing out things to the Japanese, and you could pick up bits and pieces of conversation. "We'd like to move this up," pointing to a specific area of the engine, "and relocate the angle of the intake and exhaust valves," said Clark.

Intake and exhaust valves? Wait a minute, Mr. Clark, this isn't a factory effort. It belongs to Roberts and Lawwill, remember?

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 JERRY SMITH

Yamaha's Ken Clark asks divine guidance from the Orient

And all the time we thought this was a privateer effort.

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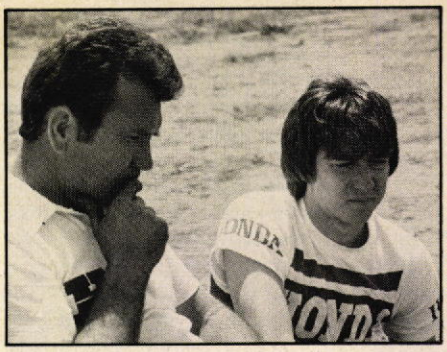

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Griffith and Spencer search for answers

A little prayer might help.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 PATRICK BEHAR

Kidd on a Harley at San Jose

Virago-less might be the way.

Later, Lawwill commented about an engine facelift. It seems they'd like to angle the exhaust port to one side to better accommodate the exhaust pipe, which has a hard time clearing the rear tire. And the intake port? Well, that's another matter. Lawwill admits it could be re-angled "just a teeny bit" for better breathing (spelled horsepower). He also admits it's unlikely those changes will be made by Yamaha.

Filice didn't transfer from his San Jose heat and so was relegated to the semi, referred to by some as the "Gong Show." He got gonged to the trophy dash, which he led at one point before finishing fourth. "Not a bad showing," said Lawwill, "especially for a rookie rider and rookie bike." But still, no points.

So while Honda and Yamaha—rather, Honda and Roberts/Lawwill Racing—continue their infiltration of Class C flattrack racing, Harley-Davidson marches on. And for you non-believers, consider that the *other* H-D team rider, defending champ Randy Goss, won the Ascot Half-Mile, giving the team a two-for-four record in the California Swing. Springsteen? He took third. Like he said after San Jose, "Harley-Davidson!" In 1981, that's spelled W-I-N-N-I-N-G.

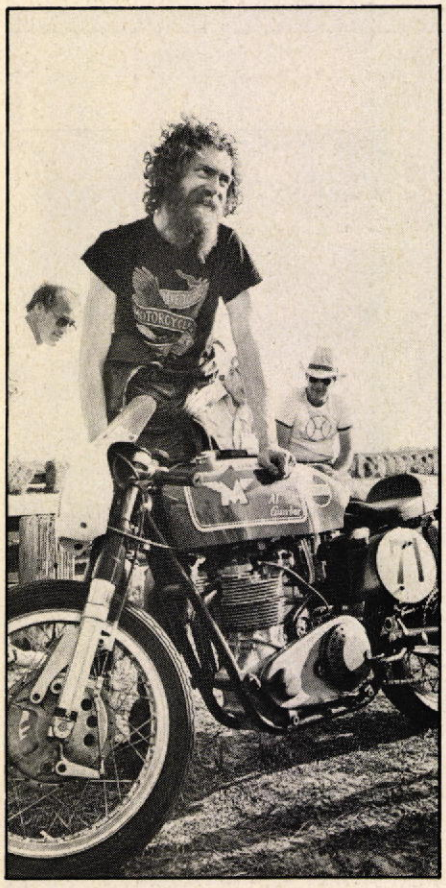
—Dain Gingerelli

Daytona's Vintage Year

Old-timer's day in more ways than one.

• What do Battle of the Twins series leader Jim Adamo, World Land Speed record-holder Don Vesco and two-time Isle of Man TT winner Clive Watts from Britain have in common? They all like to race vintage bikes, and last March at Daytona's Cycle Week they and 30 others (including yours truly) came together on the infield course for the First Annual Vintage Grand Prix.

Basically, any historic bike built before 1970 and capable of being raced was eligible, and a mouth-watering collection of machines came to the grid, rewarding the efforts of



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Dave Roper and the winning Matchless

Guess which one is obsolete.

AMA Legislative Analyst and Velocette owner Gary Winn, whose brainchild the race was. Floridian Will Harding—with enthusiastic support from all quarters—arranged the line-up, with a sizeable Canadian contingent plus the aforementioned Watts and myself from Great Britain to lend international flavor to a significant occasion in the growth of old bike racing Stateside. Daytona's event was the first race to draw riders from all over

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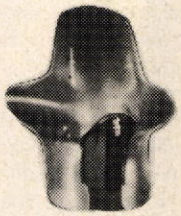

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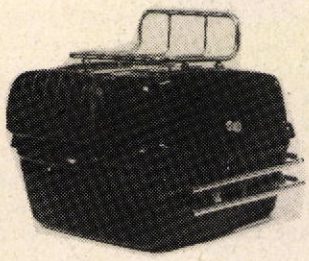

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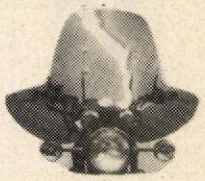

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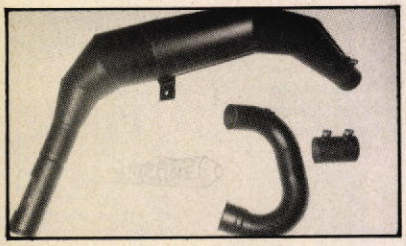

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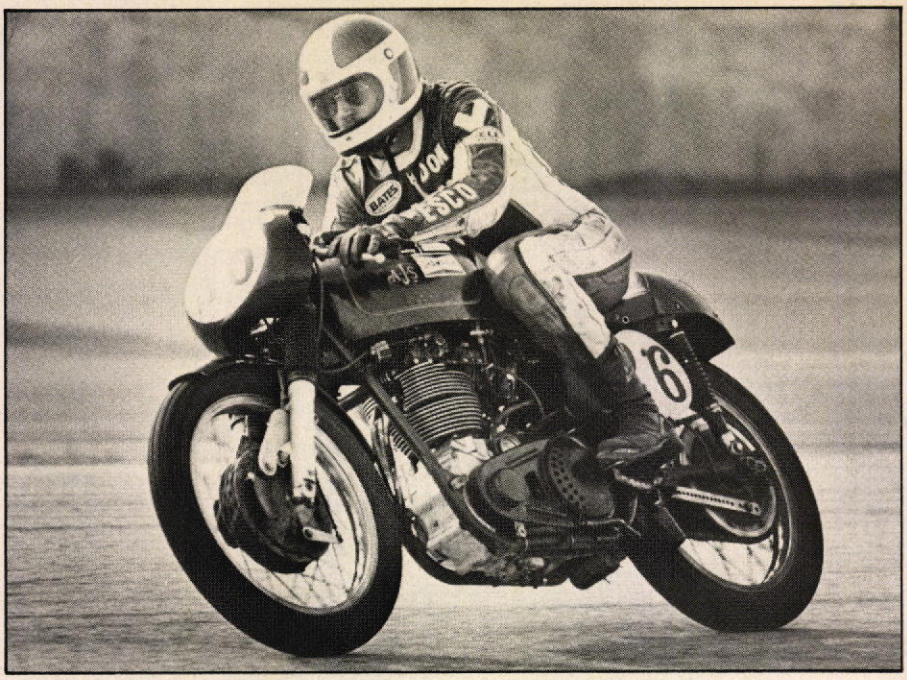

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AJS at, er, speed with Vesco aboard

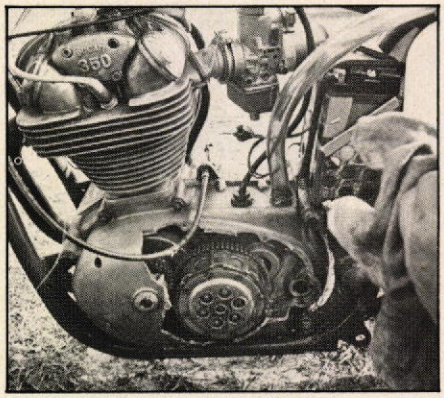
Take me to the Salt Flats, Don!

the country who'd previously competed only at local meets.

The race was eventful, to say the least, with a first-lap accident involving four riders which was easily the most spectacular of Cycle Week. The race was halted while the blocked track was cleared, and Ducati riders Sam Shinaberry and Wayne Welsh stretchered off. Fortunately, no irreparable damage was sustained by any of the bikes—you can usually repair the human body, but parts for a classic racer are hard to find.

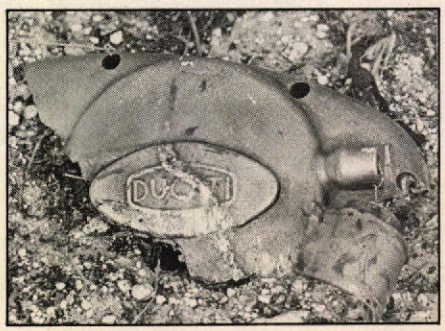
The unexpected respite gave a couple of us the chance to get back in contention. Adamo, on Reno Leoni's *very* special '66 dry-clutch Ducati 350 had laid a chain on the start-line, and my 350 Aermacchi had a blocked main-jet. Restart was in order of completion of lap One, placing Adamo and myself dead last; my excuse for letting him beat me off the line for the second straight time is that we don't do clutch starts in the UK, and by the time I'd found some bite he was long gone. Ahead, Dave Roper on the "Team Obsolete" Matchless G50 had taken an early lead, chased first by Adamo (it was *that* good a start) then by Clive Watts. Time ran out before they could get to grips, but next year Clive swears he will be back—this time with a set of slicks. Adamo led the Lightweight division throughout, with Don Vesco initially second on a 7R AJS. Superior Aermacchi handling had me past Vesco at mid-race, though the old fox promptly outbraked me into the next turn before falling back with a failing engine. It was an enjoyable race for all concerned—even with the absence of any Manx Nortons. (They can't *all* be too valuable to race, surely.)

As a finale to the Historic bike activities the Speedway laid on a concours in the infield, with 60 varied and (mostly) pristine



Aftermath of a first-lap crash

Safety wire is the only easy replacement.



machines on display. Having been saddled with the task of helping to judge the competition, I was relieved to find most of the entries were British. Picking Best in Show was a breeze: Pre-war winner was Tom McGill's superb '37 Norton Inter from Canada; best postwar bike was an equally lovely '49 Red Hunter Ariel that looked so good I was foolish enough to ask if it were a runner. "Whadda ya think," replied its indignant owner as he fired it up first kick. Well, I only *asked* . . . .

—Alan Cathcart

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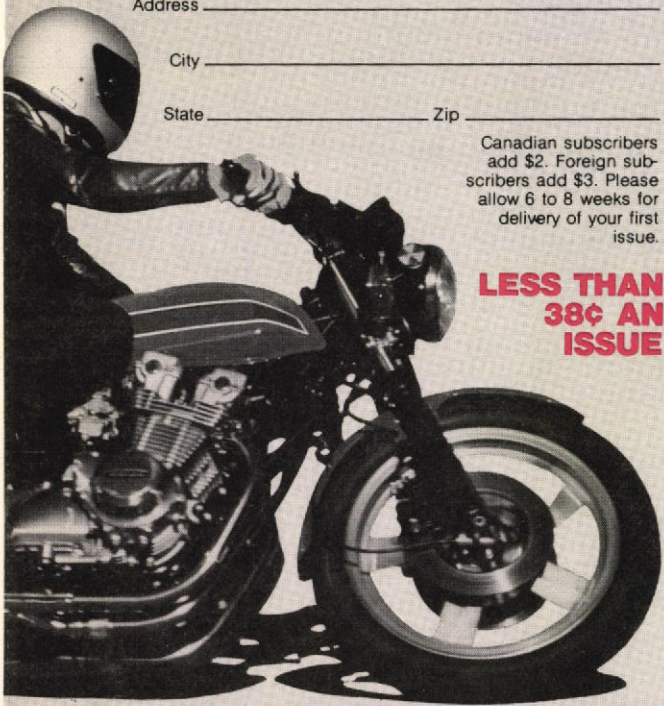

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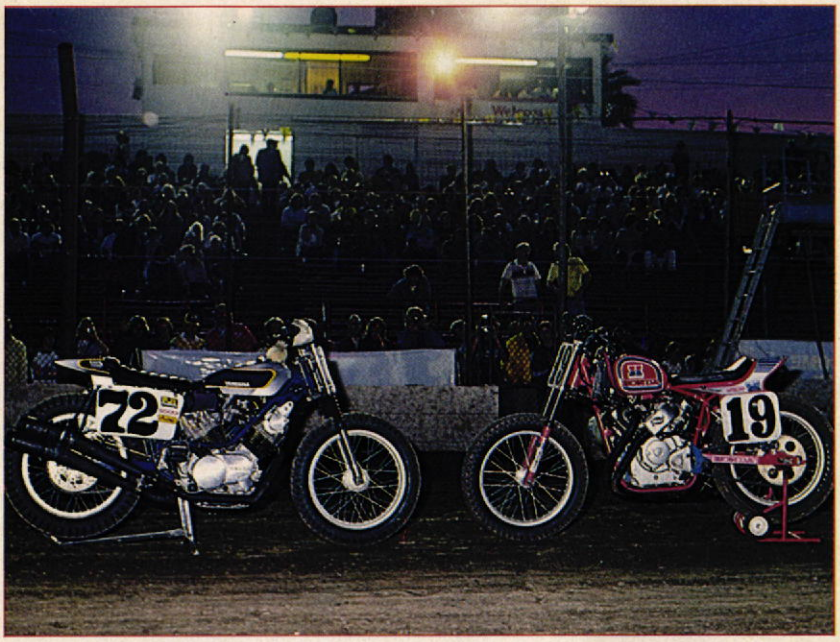
Winners & Losers

The Anti-Harley Battle Plan

Handicapping the hardware.



PHOTOGRAPHY ©1981 DAVID DEWHURST

• Honda and Yamaha might have a common enemy in the flattrack wars—Harley-Davidson—but their battle plans are utterly different. And strangely enough, the determination of the winner and the loser in this clash of the titans might prove to have more to do with strategy than the merit of the hardware itself.

Honda's NS750, for example, is very much a product of its New Racing Department in Japan, and the black art of factory fabrication is much in evidence as a result. Honda began work on the motor in November after inspecting a Harley XR that had been covertly mailed to Japan. In January, the NS750 engine arrived on Jerry Griffith's doorstep, ready-to-race—or so the NR engineers said. The factory's research and development resources are supposed to give Honda a substantial edge, but factory parts are difficult to get and American hardware is regarded with some disdain by the Japanese.

Mert Lawwill and C.R. Axtell, the two main components of International Racers, assigned by Yamaha to make a winner out of the Yamaha vee-twin, received their engine in February. But in this case, the motor was virtually bone-stock—XV920 crankcases with XV750 jugs. International Racers would have to depend on Axtell for engine development. Yet at the same time, the team was free to experiment with speed equipment and the supply of inexpensive production parts was nearly unlimited.

A glance at the Yamaha race engine confirms its production orientation. The alternator and ignition have been removed of course, replaced by dual points located on the front cylinder. Naturally, the clutch is substantially modified (both the Yamaha and Honda production twins have weak clutches by racing standards). But aside from a slight rearrangement of intake manifolds to permit optimum placement of the DellOrto pumper carbs, the Yamaha heritage is easy to see.

The NS750 is just as clearly a Honda—a racing Honda, that is. No expense has been spared in the execution of what must have been a fabricator's nightmare. The external differences from last year's CX500 racer are the rotated cylinder heads (arranging the carbs and pipes like a Harley) and the CR250R radiator. But all the tricky bits are inside this year. The crank has been shot-peened, the bore stretched to 87mm and the stroke lengthened to 63mm. The compression ratio is in the neighborhood of 11.5:1—beyond that of even Yamaha, much less Harley-Davidson. The transmission has been upgraded for racing purposes, but the NS is limited to two or three sets of gears versus 12 for a

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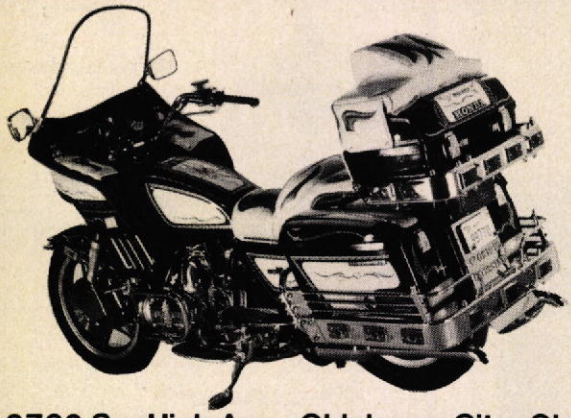

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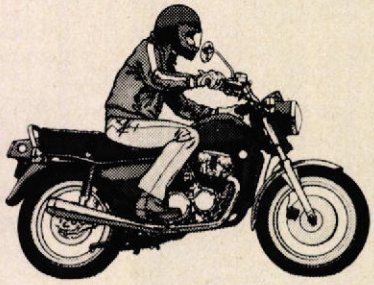

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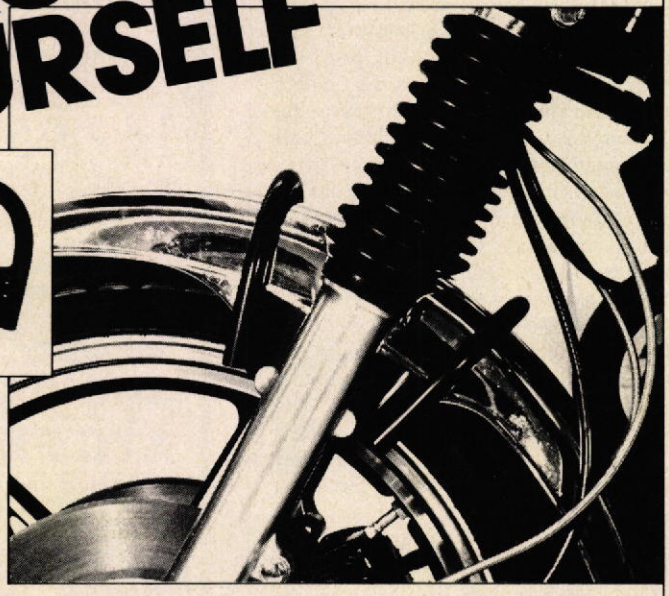

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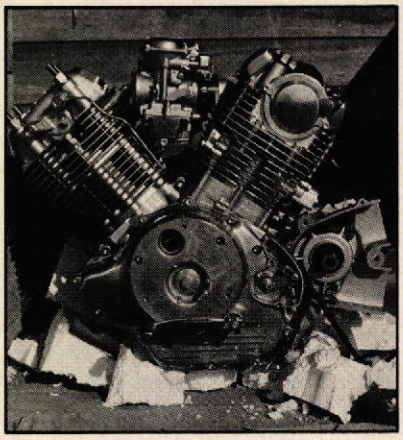
Harley XR. Extraordinarily complex machining was necessary to enlarge the CX500's displacement, for the cylinders are actually a part of the crankcases in this water-cooled engine, and there's not much room between cylinder wall and water jacket. The NS also uses electronic ignition—as in true Honda racing tradition, the factory does not like any adjustments to its ignition settings.

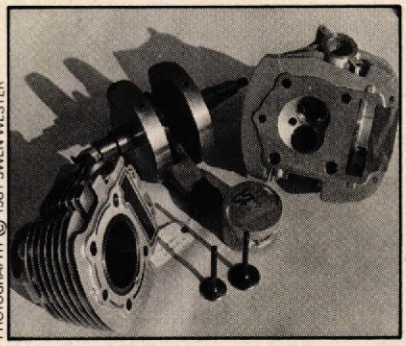
To understand the way these engines are expected to *produce* race-winning horsepower, though, you must penetrate beyond the hardware. The best way is to understand what each engine builder regards as the advantages and disadvantages of his particular engine.

Ask a Honda representative about the advantages of the CX500 for making horsepower and he'll shrug his shoulders and tell you there aren't any. Indeed, the massive rebuilding required to transform the CX into the NS750 attests to the problems. Nevertheless, the NS750 makes its horsepower through lots of rpm, just like all Hondas. At its power peak of around 9200 rpm, the NS makes a claimed 88 hp, about four shy of a Harley. But there are problems. The power pulses come at a constant, rapid-fire pace, while a Harley acts like a large single. So the Honda's rear tire doesn't have a chance to



From Yamaha to Lawwill to the racetrack

You wanted a motor out of the crate?



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Half of the business side of the Yammie

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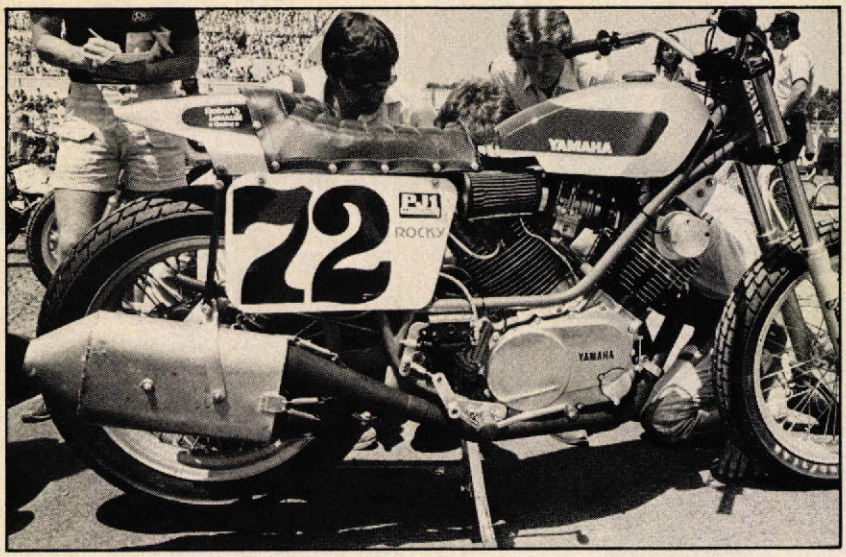

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A loud-side profile of Kidd's machine

You wanted maybe coffee cans?

grab for traction before the engine spins it again. Thanks to its cammy powerband and staggered power pulses, the NS750 can light up its rear tire almost anywhere on the track—and Griffith is having a difficult time convincing the Japanese that this is a disadvantage. Work with different flywheels continues.

Witch doctor Axtell reports that the Yamaha also has substantial high-rpm potential—up to 10,020 rpm, in fact—but he reckons the motor's one-piece forged crank, with side-by-side rods, is a major benefit. And, because the motor was originally designed to be a stressed member of the chassis, it uses oversize cylinder studs and immensely strong cases to give it a definite durability edge over the opposition. So when Axtell finally finds the horsepower, he is sure that the motor will take it.

Strangely enough, though, positioning these engines in their chassis has proved a far greater problem than making horsepower. Both motors have wet sumps, which means they must be placed higher than they should be in their respective frames just to gain sufficient ground clearance. But still, Yamaha discovered a motor can be too low at San Jose when Filice found his engine cases banging on the ground in the corners. Honda has the same problem, complicated by a wide swingarm imposed by rotating a normally long motor across the chassis. Honda is further handicapped by the fact that its critical exhaust plumbing must also mount wide to clear the swingarm and shocks. And with the motor dictating a two-inch-shorter chassis than a Harley, the NS750 has an obvious weight location problem. When you add the further quan-

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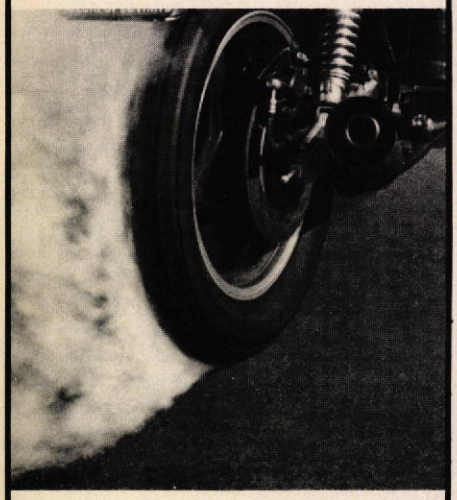

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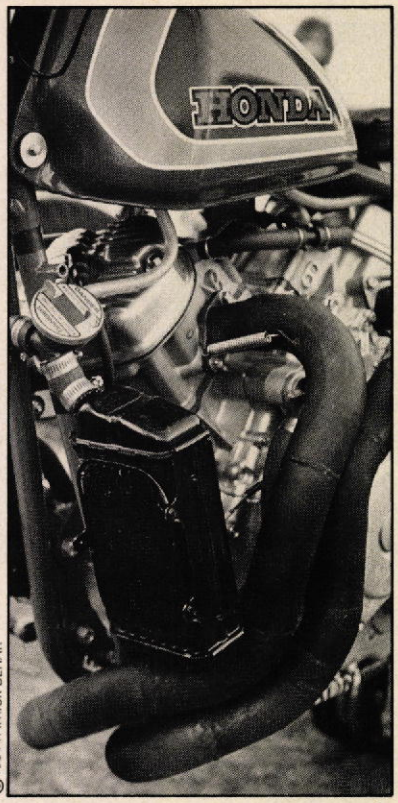

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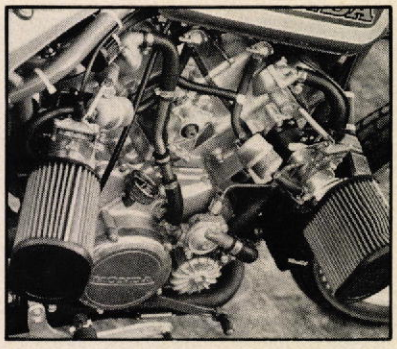
Exhaust plumbing is indeed nightmarish

Mounted wide to clear at the rear.



One view of the Honda's problem

Where to fit the rider's leg?

dary of a cammy engine and a short wheelbase, it's no wonder the NS750 tends toward time-wasting wheelies on the start-line and twitches in the corners.

Despite the problems involved in developing a new engine, Honda and Yamaha finally seem closer to qualifying their bikes for a Grand National field, and only about a second or so separates the fastest qualifier from the slowest on the Winston Pro circuit. How difficult should it be to gain a second per lap, after all? Both Honda and Yamaha must realize, however, that it took Harley-Davidson nearly a decade to put its XR engine up front. It's difficult to believe that even Honda or Yamaha could accomplish the same feat in only a year. —*Michael Jordan*

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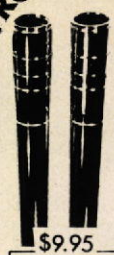

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Pit Bits

• With 668 entries **sandwiched** into the program for the Isle of Man TT races this year, the IOM rightfully prides itself as the most popular—and populous—**road-race** meeting among competitors worldwide. Why do so many riders choose to risk life and limb on the **dangerous,** often tragedy-marred and grueling 37-plus mile circuit each year? **Money** might be the answer. In 1981, the race organizers have amassed $500,000 in purse money to be divided among the various classes, plus contingencies offered by several international companies who seek **publicity** from IOM wins. Add to that the start money offered to name riders—some are reportedly receiving $20,000 just to show up—and the potential dollars at stake hover around One Million. Tempting.

• Honda's NR500 roadracer development continues to **lumber** along. It's best showing early in the FIM season was a 17th at the West German Grand Prix. Unfortunately, that was in qualifying—the bike DNF the actual race. "We have still more work to do, naturally," said Japanese pilot

NR500 speed and reliability are elusive

Takazumi might return to rock 'n roll.

Continued

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Takazumi Katayama, who seems to be mastering the **art** of English understatement. "Zoomy" went on to congratulate Honda for its efforts in producing a "very advanced four-stroke engine which could very well be used for sport production bikes in the future." Well, if it'll do at least 55 mph, it might sell over here.

• Tony **DiStefano,** Suzuki's former three-time 250cc National MX champion and also late of Husqvarna, has been inked to ride Maicos in the 500cc Nationals this summer. Originally signed with the Swedes, "Tony D" jumped to the Germans because of a "better deal."

• News from Australia concerns another ex-Suzuki ace, four-time USGP **winner** Gerrit Wolsink, who acts as the motocross/enduro rider's representative to the FIM. Wolsink has reportedly **approached** the FIM Technical Committee with proposals that could change the face of World Championship motocross. In short, "Wolfie" suggested that both the 125 and 250cc Grand Prix classes be **limited** to production machines only, with preparation and tuning left to individual mechanics who would operate under strict guidelines. The absence of factory involvement in the smaller classes would hopefully reduce costs to privateer racers, leaving the 500cc class to the manufacturers to **experiment** with. Formula One motocross?

• Add Wolsink: Currently riding **without** factory **portfolio** in the 500cc GPs, Wolsink recently purchased Graham Noyce's practice bike—a 1980 Honda RC450—and will contest it this summer on the international circuit. The bike's no slug, though. Before Noyce got it, Roger **De Coster** used it to win the last Grand Prix of his career in Luxembourg in 1980.

• **Stateside** news touts a multi-million-dollar sports and entertainment facility, to be known as Entertainment U.S.A., opening in Northeastern Ohio in August. Occupying a 100-acre site, with lawn-seating for 80,000 and parking for 12,000 cars by next spring, E-U.S.A. is reportedly designed especially for professional **motorsports** events. The amphitheater will house a half-mile dirttrack, and within its infield will repose two stadium-type motocross tracks. Promoters hope to draw big-time stock car, midget, four-wheel off-road and snowmobile racing events—plus tractor pulls—along with two-wheelers. Horse shows, dog shows, car shows and **flea markets** are also said to be on tap. The all-things-to-all-folks place will feature a stage for rock and c/w acts, replete with underground dressing rooms and a **medical** facility. Guess rock stars need doctors more than racers, right?

• Sometimes. Larry Roeseler broke a collarbone and separated a shoulder last April in the Las Vegas 400 off-road race, and hasn't been able to compete in the

NEP's TOUGH CHOICE

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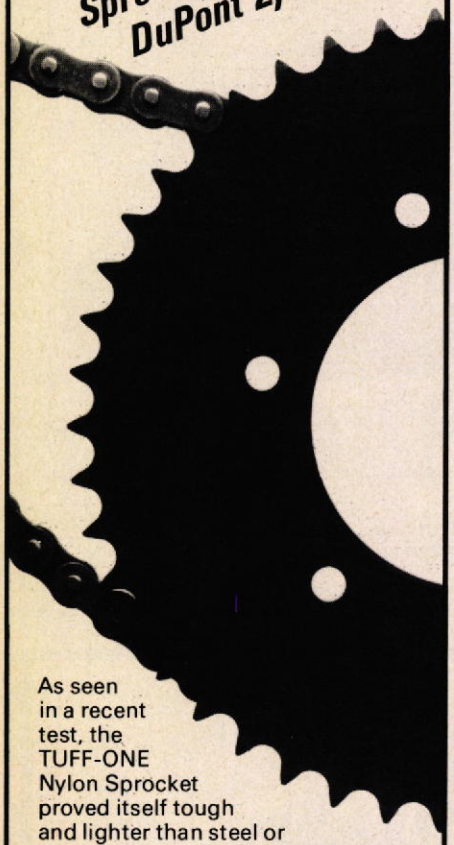

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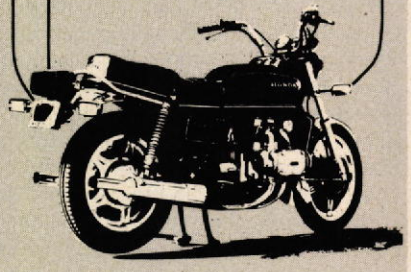

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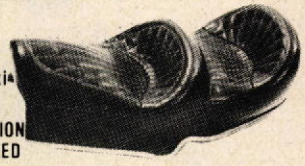

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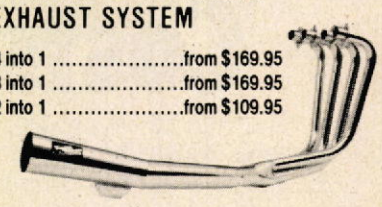

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AMA Two-Day Qualifier Series this year. **Roeseler,** America's top finisher at the last two ISDTs (hereafter known as the ISDE), has asked to be placed on the injury **exemption** list for the 1981 ISDE on Italy's Isle of Elba, which would keep his hopes alive for a third **straight** Gold Medal. The AMA is expected to grant the well-deserved special dispensation.

• Dutch roadrace ace Wil Hartog has hung up his leathers after **indifferent** (read: no points) **results** in the 1981 FIM 500cc championships. Hartog has five Grand Prix wins to his credit in a career that spanned nine years. He placed sixth overall last season, but was forced to rerun his RG500 80-model when Suzuki wouldn't give him a new machine at the start of this season.

• The picture below shows one of the many floral tributes at the Isle of Man TT grandstand in honor of the late Mike Hailwood. Following a special memorial service—the second held on the Island for "Mike the Bike"—on June 7, whole sections of the course were lined with floral arrangements, a special lap was run in his honor and race organizers were deciding which part of the circuit would be named after Hailwood as a permanent tribute.

PHOTOGRAPHY © 1981 DOUG BAIRD

• Heavy **rumors** are circulating around a return to roadracing for 16-time world champ Giacomo **Agostini.** Not as a pilot, however, but as a race team owner/manager. Following an unsuccessful fling with Formula Two cars, it appears that Ago's **love affair** with motorcycles is about to be rekindled. The rumors have him joined with AGV, the Italian helmet manufacturer, for an all-out effort in 1982. Team members, who have yet to be named, will probably be Yamaha-mounted, underscoring Ago's longtime association with

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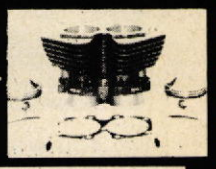

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that company. Two **names** currently being **bandied** about as Ago/AGV riders are Franco Uncini and Virginio Ferrari. Kenny Roberts was also seen recently, deep in conversation with Agostini. It is known that Roberts would love to bring his protege Jim Filice to Europe—probably for 250cc competition—and speculation is that a **Roberts/Filice** duo would round out the squad Ago is forming.

• Getting to Europe isn't just a **problem** for roadracers. U.S. involvement in the Trophee and Motocross des Nations, two team races sanctioned by the FIM at the end of the GP season each year, has been **nonexistent** the past two years. Which has made the FIM, shall we say, a bit angry at the AMA. So **mad,** in fact, that the international body has lifted the 125cc USGP from our shores beginning in 1982. The reasoning is that if we won't support MX in Europe, they feel no compunction to support it here. Fears are that with continued U.S. no-shows at the team events, both the 250 and 500cc USGP sanctions might be in **jeopardy,** too. The AMA's position is that it can't afford to send a four-man U.S. team—at about $10,000 per rider—and that the U.S. manufacturers are reluctant to spend the dough because of limited advertising return on events outside America. Accordingly, four riders—Bob **Hannah,** Mark Barnett, Broc Glover and Mike Bell—have stated that they will attend the season-ending events, even if support isn't forthcoming from their respective **sponsors.** Want to bet that the 10-Gs will be added to their contract demands next year?

• Effective in 1983, the FIM will **de-claw** the tires used at the annual ISDE. No **knobbies** will be allowed on enduro bikes at the competition from that date forward. Instead, all riders will be **required** to use trials universal tires in an FIM concession to environmentalists. The trials universal tread pattern that will be allowed is being **defined** by the FIM now, and will be sent to affected tire companies in time for the '83 ISDE, and the AMA will decide whether to adopt the FIM rules for AMA Two-Day and National enduro competition at its fall Congress meeting. A side **benefit** of the change will be the de-tuning of enduro motors—milder than the motocross engines now in use—for smoother delivery of power to the ground. The ISDE could, then, be returning to its classic format, with long distance off-road **endurance** taking precedence from the current MX-style special test racing.

• In the **swelter** of summer it's sometimes refreshing to remind oneself that old man winter is just around the corner. To that end, here's a photo of Vladimir Suchov and Sergey Jarovoi of the Soviet Union in action at the 1981 World **Ice** Speedway Championships. Suchov finished second overall. Jarovoi **didn't** place. Wherever he is now, we bet it's *verrrry* cold. •

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The Russians are coming

And going, going, gone.

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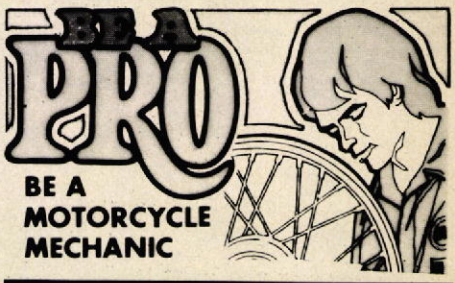

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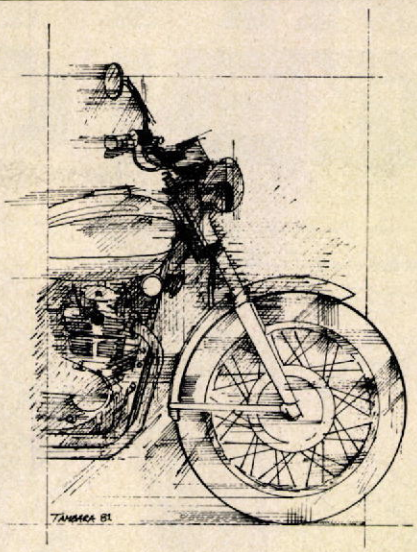
FREEBIE JEEBIES

I feel pretty damn bad about being a resident of Missouri right now, especially since I can't participate in your $35,000 Motorcycle Giveaway. I presently own a '72 T500 Suzuki with about 20,000 miles on her, and my off-road machine is a '72 SL100 Honda that is in the middle of a rebuild—which, by the way, is costing me more than the bike is worth just for parts! Anyway, a KZ1100 Shaft sure would be nice. A GS750ET would be nice, too, or an XR500R, Husky 250CR or KZ440D. Need I go on? I'd even settle for a free pair of goggles or gloves. I am seriously considering moving to another state. Hmmm . . . or it may be time to change the state legislature, just a tad.

William Thomas Mordica
Columbia, Missouri



I read with rapt interest about your $35,000 Motorcycle Giveaway and then noted with dismay that the offer was "Void In Missouri." The state of Missouri has changed its sweepstakes law, and I believe we should be allowed to enter your Giveaway. Please verify this matter posthaste for your Missouri readers and subscribers.

Daniel L. Clark
King City, Missouri

We will, and you're right—the law has been changed. Missourians, "show me" your Giveaway entries—ed.

VETTER PHONE FLUB

If you could send me any information you have about the Vetter Rally '81, August 11–15 at the Loretta Lynn Dude Ranch, I would appreciate it. When I phoned the toll-free number (800) 252-1160, as given in CYCLE GUIDE, I kept getting a recording that said the call couldn't be completed as dialed.

John R. Abbott
Troy, New York

That's because the number you dialed is for Illinois residents only. Try (800) 637-6053—ed.

FORGET ME NOT

Having plugged away at amateur road-racing for eight years now, I enjoyed Riley Tharp's profile of George Nolan (*CG*, June '81) who finished 22nd in the Daytona Novice race, but you missed a good story by ignoring the *winner* of that contest.

David Greene, a Texan no less, led only once—at the finish line. Using the draft like an Expert, he nipped two hot Californians by a half-a-bike-length in the run to the flag, becoming the oldest rider

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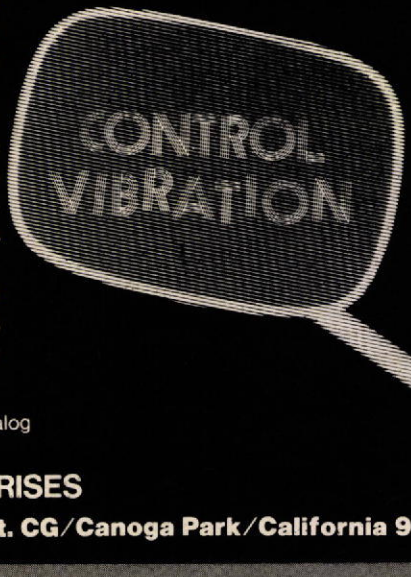

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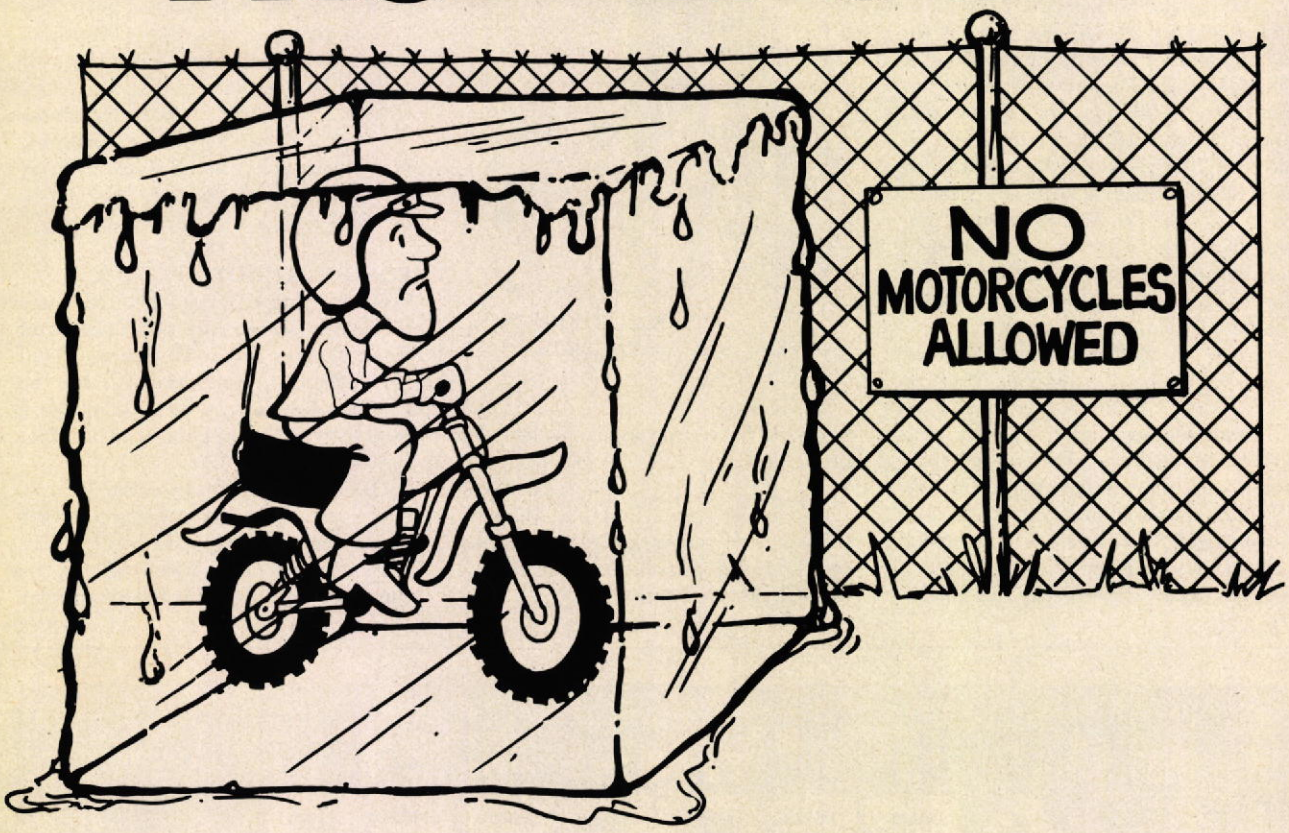

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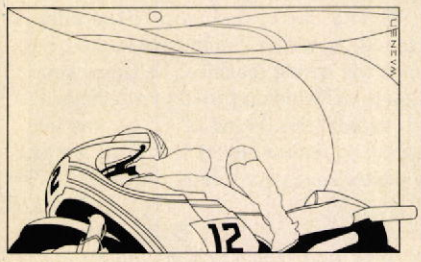
LETTERS

(36) ever to win this race. Talk about the "disappointments" of life as a Novice, when you win the season's only big event and can't even get your *name* in the glossies you've got to wonder whether there's really any point to it all—especially when a guy who didn't make the top twenty gets two photos and a nice write-up.

Behind-the-scenes stories on people like Nolan are great, but how about a little solid reporting to back them up? Many of your readers would have been interested in seeing the race *results*. David Greene, for instance.

Alston Jennings, Jr.
Little Rock, Arkansas

As a rule, we rarely print race results; preferring instead to find a fresh angle. Our apologies to Mr. Greene—ed.



AD SEX CONS

I agree with almost everything that Stephen Byarlay says in his letter (*CG*, June '81). If we wanted to gloat over ads featuring scantily-clad women we could buy *Easyrider*. I am sure you would agree that CYCLE GUIDE and publications of similar quality are aimed at a readership which 1.) is interested in motorcycles and aftermarket products of a high quality and genuine utility, 2.) can well afford the purchase price of such products, and 3.) is attracted to ads for such products by the products themselves and not by extraneous glitter. You would be well advised to adopt a policy of not accepting ads which contain material of questionable taste. Advertisers anxious to reach the type of readership you serve should be happy to conform. I, for one, intend to boycott every product which I see advertised in copy featuring semi-nude women.

Alexander V. Areno
New York, New York

AD SEX PROS

Tell Stephen Byarlay to bite on a handball and chew on that for a while. I didn't know that CYCLE GUIDE was catering to one reader. How about a reader survey on those beautiful, lovely, sweet curves in the ads? Byarlay, you'd lose a thousand to one.

Douglass Grindstaff
Fulton, Missouri

Continued

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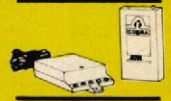

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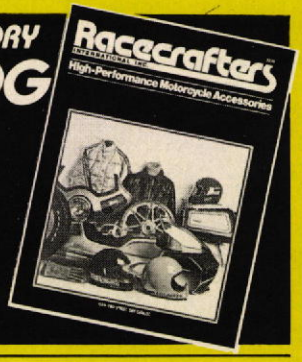

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LETTERS

AGE HAS ITS MERITS

As a new subscriber, and having been around this earth since 1914, I'd like to contribute my certain opinions.

Your readers can still get many good buys on new 1980 bikes if they just shop around. I bought a new KZ440B which brings my ownership of cycles back up to three—one Yamaha and two Kawasakis. Here in the hills I prefer my new 350-pound twin with only two valves per cylinder. Handfuls of exhaust valves only mean to me that the basic engine design has to get rid of excess heat.

The new instrument panels may be peachy on a Ferrari, but don't belong on a two-wheeler where your eyeballs should be on the road and traffic. If you can't keep track of what's going on mechanically, you have no business riding a cycle. I also note that a "commuter" Honda is on the market now, and it's sold with no tachometer. How do you ride a Honda without a tach? Do you rev it up to four beehives or three?

Lastly, regarding the girls in the ads ("Letters," *CG*, June '81): I think that Missouri dude's mother-in-law was standing behind him when he wrote that letter! He should check the swimsuit ads in the J.C. Penney catalog. Corruptible!

Jack Whitley
Tuolumne, California

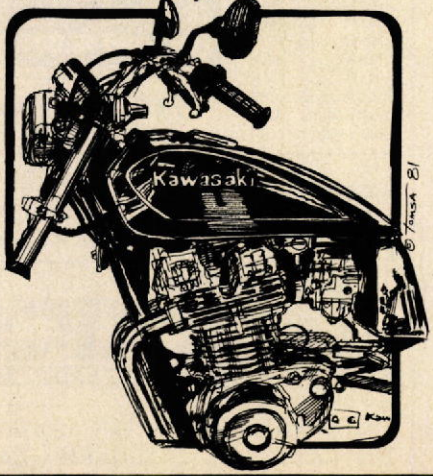
Hear, hear! Now, if you had only forwarded that catalog . . . —ed.

VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

In reference to Ted West's column, "Seeing A Ghost" (*CG*, May '81), it is clear that Mr. West is not a New Yorker. The only plausible explanation for the condition of the Kawasaki in question is that a thief, unable to cut through the chain by which a cautious owner bound the bike to the No Parking sign, decided to get even. It happens all the time here.

Alexander Areno
New York, New York

We won't ask how you know—ed.



THOMPSON'S TUMBLE

Steve Thompson deserves to have his brains scrambled—again. He should have entitled his editorial in the May '81 issue "Riding Stupid" because he sure wasn't *alone*. All he had to do was lie there long enough and he collected two helpers, a sheriff and an ambulance with paramedics.

I have ridden alone for tens of thousands of miles in the Western deserts and mountains without incident. I realize it's risky, so I take great care in the selection and preparation of my machine and riding gear. Furthermore, I ride cautiously, always observing one cardinal rule: Don't go down what you can't get up. (In Thompson's case, the order should be reversed.) This means that I do a lot of evaluation on foot.

Thompson violated most of the rules. He rode where he should have walked; he used the wrong machine; he threw caution to the wind and tried to ride beyond his capabilities. Worst of all, he was too stupid to realize any of this until it was too late. Take your lumps, Steve.

Dick Brass
Butte, Montana

He has. And so will you, no matter how carefully you prepare. If you insist on riding alone, you're asking for it–ed.

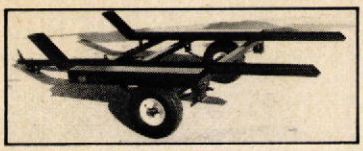
DUTCH TREATISE

I'd like to say something about your "Euro-craze." I just cannot help getting sick over all those letters and articles concerning the CB900F and the XJ650. The Honda is coming to the U.S. soon, so I won't waste my ink over that one, but about the XJ650—believe me, you're not missing anything. It sure is a nice bike, but how the hell can you get so crazy about it when you've got the GPz550 to hustle around on? Furthermore, how can you say that the XJ is so fantastic if you haven't even tested a *real* medium-displacement hyperbike like the Ducati Pantah 500 or 600?

And don't you dare give me your, "Hell, there's another Europe-only bike that we can't get our hands on." Just for the record, the only great Japanese bikes are the GPz550 and the Yamaha 750 Seca, and the Seca is a U.S.A.-only bike (at least for the next few decades). For years the situation has been that a bike started out as U.S.A.-only and *then* it came to Europe only after you guys had had it for all eternity. But over the last few years the tables have been turning. There are a lot of Japanese Eurobikes for sale here now—I really like it a lot and I have no pity for you at all.

I wish all the best to the entire staff and hope you'll soon get the chance to

CYCLE TRAILERS



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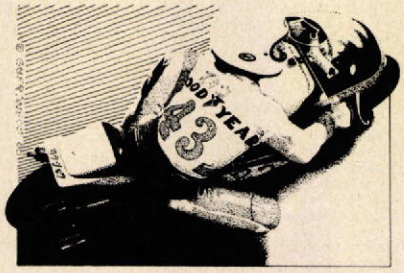
LETTERS

ride a real bike like my own Italian two-stroke twin, the Moto Guzzi 250TS, which can embarrass any Japanese bike up to twice or even triple its size at a traffic sign.

Rene Foree
Rotterdam, Holland

Maybe at a traffic sign, but how about underway?—ed.



THROWING A CURVE

I found John Porter's article, "Winning The Warranty Game" (*CG*, May '81), fairly instructive and, to a point, good advice. However, I believe his recommendation to play "hardball" with the factory is in error. The term "hardball" has many connotations, most of them negative. This kind of approach will prove to be detrimental for most persons, for two reasons.

One, warranty problems fall into these three general classes: white (clearly warranty), black (clearly not warranty), and grey (maybe/maybe not warranty). The grey is the largest class and calls upon a factory representative's skill, experience and judgment to make a fair and equitable decision.

Two, the factory representative is a person. You are dealing with people, not factories. When is the last time you responded favorably when someone played "hardball" with you? When a decision can go either way, playing "hardball games" is not a winning strategy.

After working in the area of customer service and warranty for many years, I find that honesty, conviction and determination are most effective and, in some instances, an unbeatable combination.

Dave Dora, Manager
Consumer/Warranty Services
Kawasaki Motors Corp., U.S.A.

Address correspondence to LETTERS, CYCLE GUIDE *Magazine, P.O. Box 6040, Compton, California 90224. Replies are not possible except in this column. Letters may be edited for clarity and brevity. We will print as many letters and replies as space allows.* •

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